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AUNT EMMA



Aunt Emma

Elizabeth Spooner

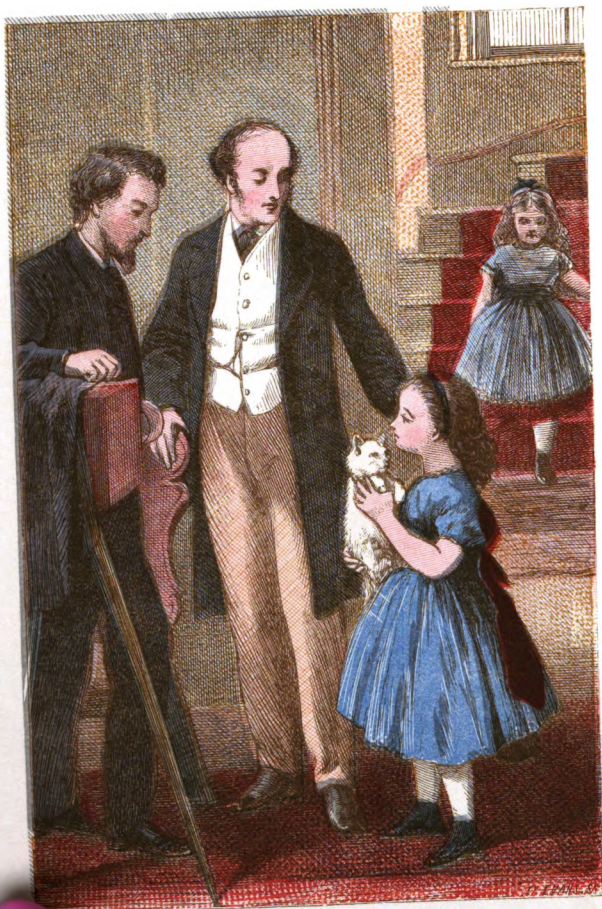
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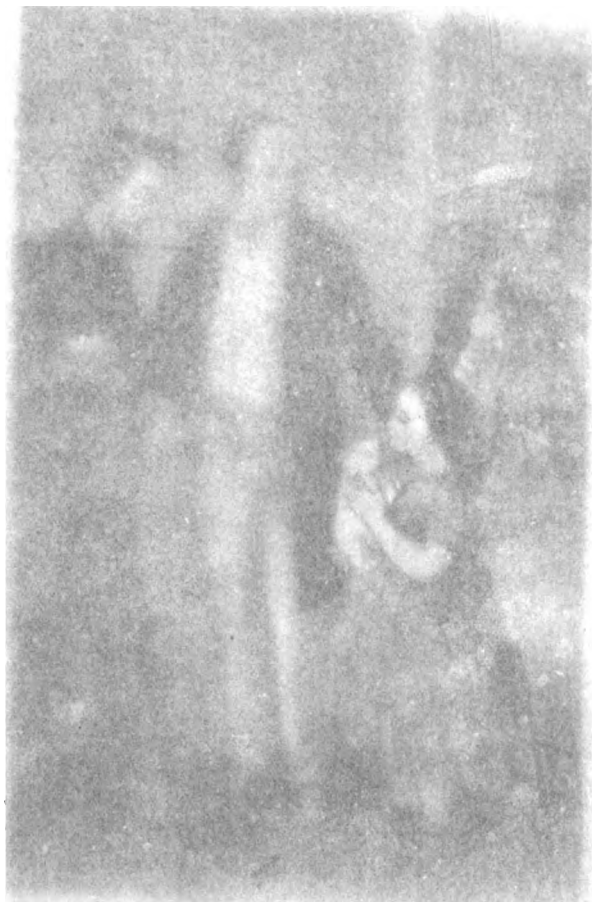
AUNT EMMA.



AUNT EMMA.

[Front.]





AUNT EMMA



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AUNT EMMA.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "ROSE AND KATE."

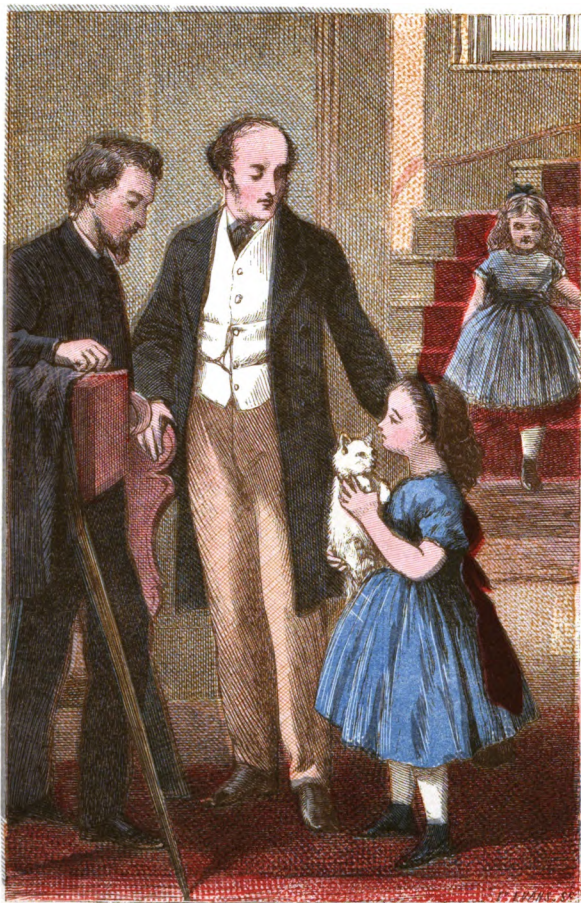
Spencer, Elizabeth

With Coloured Illustrations.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL;
NEW YORK: 129, GRAND STREET.
1866.

Miss M. J. A. ...
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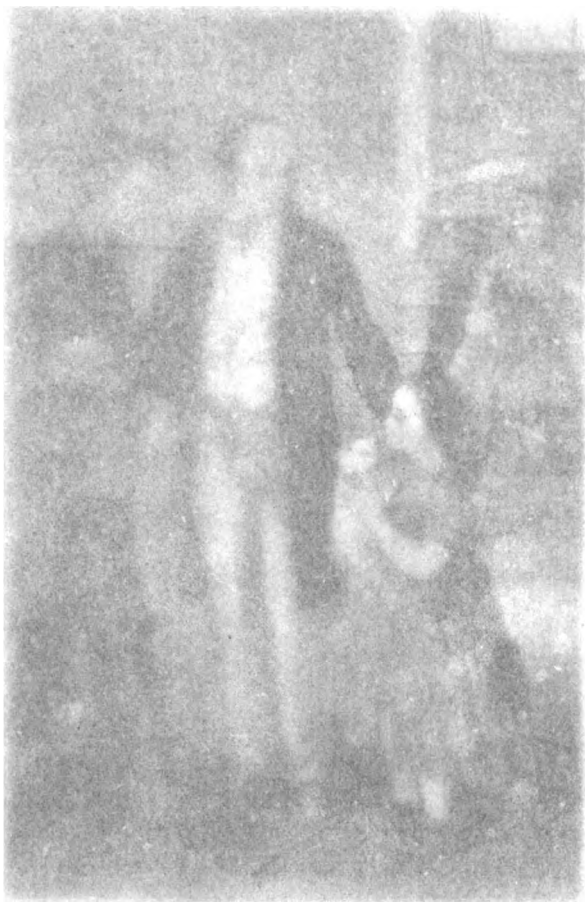
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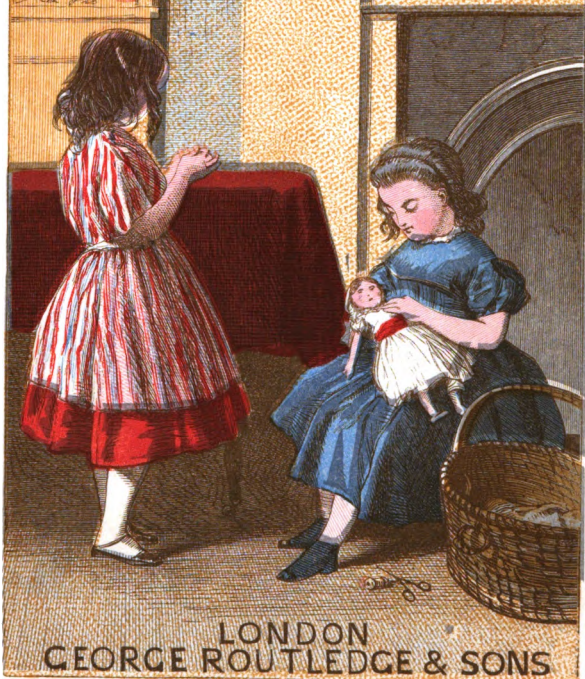
AUNT EMMA.

[Front.]





AUNT EMMA



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AUNT EMMA.

CHAPTER I.

IT was March—cold, bleak, and dreary. The east wind was whistling away, and flakes of snow were falling, and the sky looked dull and leaden, and there certainly was nothing to attract any one out of the house who could stay in, and keep warm and comfortable by a cheerful fire.

But it so chanced that this cold chilling day was Lucy Campbell's birthday, and as the Dean and Mrs. Campbell were absent from home, Aunt Emma had asked leave for her and Edith to come up and spend the day with Rose and Kate, and so about twelve o'clock they arrived.

This was the very first time that Lucy had been allowed to leave home for a day since her accident. She had been kept on the sofa and lying still, and even now the pain was not quite gone. She felt it in her thigh rather badly at times, but she was much better, and in a fair way, the doctor told her, to get

well, if she would take care and not be too wild and impetuous when she was playing. Now Lucy was very impetuous by nature, and liked to do just as she wished, so that it was very hard work for her to be quiet, and her mother had to say over and over again, "Now, dear Lucy, do keep yourself still; don't be so eager, and so restless. You will certainly bring back the pain in your thigh and ankle again." And for a little time Lucy would lie still; then perhaps Edith, or one of her brothers, would excite her, or do something that did not please her, and up she would jump again, and forget all mamma's exhortations, and all her own good resolutions to be quiet.

Aunt Emma knew this, and it had made her afraid of asking Lucy up to the Hall, especially in her mother's absence, but Mrs. Campbell had written to say that if they were asked they might go, and as soon as Aunt Emma knew about this permission, she did ask them, to the great delight of all the children.

It was just twelve o'clock when the brougham from the Deanery drove up to the door, and in the brougham were Lucy and Edith, little Agnes, and old Nurse; for Nurse would not hear of Lucy coming without her, for fear her high spirits should carry her away, and she should do too much; and as Nurse came, little Agnes came too.

And oh, how pleased Kate and Rose were to see them! how they did kiss and hug Agnes, and dance about the hall, wild with joy.

"Oh, you little pet!" said Rosie to Agnes, "I am so glad to see you, you darling little thing!"

"But I am not such a little thing," said Agnes, drawing herself up and trying to look tall. "I am three, rising in four."

"But still you are quite a little pet for all that," answered Rosie, "and I am going to carry you up-stairs."

"Indeed you must not think of doing such a thing, Miss Rose," said Nurse. "Miss Agnes very seldom lets me carry her, she likes to walk up-stairs, and she is a great deal too heavy for you."

"I shall walk up myself, Nurse—I am a big girl now. Look at me! look!"

And the little mite, full of self-importance, went marching up the wide, wide staircase, and expecting that everybody should watch her progress. I am not so sure that they all did watch her, but Nurse did, though she did not appear to do so, and took care that she did not fall, and when she did reach the top, it was an extreme happiness to peep through the open bannisters at the others coming winding up their way, and to say, "Peep, peep, look at Aggy!"

Lucy, in the meantime, had been the object of Kate's deepest tenderness and utmost attention. "Oh, dear Lucy, how charming it is to see you again! How extremely glad I am that your mamma gave you leave to come—it is such a very long time since you were here, and now I am going to take you into

Aunt Emma's room, because she said I was to, as she has something to say to you." /

"Something horrid, I dare say," said Lucy, "about taking care and not hurting myself, and all that."

"Aunt Emma never says anything horrid, Lucy," here interrupted Aunt Emma's good and true champion, Rosie, "and I won't have you say so of her."

"I shall say just what I like of Aunt Emma and everybody else," said Miss Lucy, who, if the truth must be told, had had rather more petting and fuss made with her than was good for her during her three months' lameness, and she had become quite saucy; but we must hope that as she grows older she will grow wiser, and won't make herself so disagreeable as she often does now.

Before Aunt Emma's door was reached, it was opened by Aunt Emma herself, who came out and welcomed Lucy most affectionately to the Hall, and kissed her warmly; then looking at her, she said—

"Why, Lucy, you are very much grown since you were here last, that sad day of the accident. You are getting a tall girl." Then smiling, she added, "You know that true old proverb, don't you, dear, 'Ill weeds grow apace.'"

"Yes," said Lucy, "I heard it the other day, for Dr. Birch said it to me, and mamma, who was standing by, told me to make this answer, 'Good rye grows high,' and I am the good rye, Aunt Emma

and not an ill weed ; at least, I know quite well my own mamma thinks so.'

"I shan't make up my mind, Lucy, as to which you are," answered Aunt Emma, "till I see how you get through this day. If you are the good rye, you will be quiet, and not get yourself, and all of us into trouble by being too boisterous and knocking yourself up again ; but if you are an ill weed, you will forget what has been said to you."

Lucy looked a little downcast at these words, and rather disposed to cry, for Aunt Emma said them very gravely, knowing how necessary it was to make Lucy watchful over herself, and having said them, she added very cheerfully and kindly, "And now run away, dear, and be as happy as you can be, without too much bluster and riot, and good bye for the present, good Rye, for such I am sure you will prove yourself to be."

Off they trotted, helter skelter, into the nursery, and there they stayed till dinner-time.

The great event at dinner was the arrival of a large plum-pudding all on fire : this excited all the children very much, and especially little Agnes, who clapped her hands and screamed, partly with delight, and partly, half afraid.

"Let me have some all flaming on my own plate," said Lucy.

"And me too !" cried another.

"And me too !" then went all round the table.

But Mr. Howard, who had come into luncheon that he might see the children, and had taken the helping of the fiery pudding into his own hands, said, "No! no! little ones. I shall not give any of you burning pudding to eat. You may have pudding without flames, or none at all—choose!"

"Pudding without flames!" came from two or three voices.

"No pudding at all!" came from one.

Mr. Howard looked round to see from which, and it was from his own little Katie.

"Why, Katie, so you won't have any pudding, except you may have it flaming, won't you?"

"No, papa, I won't!" answered Miss Katie, "for Lucy says that people do eat fire, and that she has seen a man swallow flames."

"And so I have!" exclaimed Lucy: "he was a juggler, and he put some ribbon all on fire into his mouth and eat it, and it did not hurt him a bit."

"I advise you not to try the experiment, Lucy," then said Mr. Howard. "A juggler can do things that other people can't; it's his business and his craft to do odd things, and he can do them, though how I am sure I don't know, without hurting himself; but if you were to try, you would soon find out that it is not so easy a matter to put flames into your mouth without being burnt. Katie, as you are not a juggler, and therefore cannot have flaming pudding, I will allow you to choose once again."

Then said Katie, looking a little ashamed—"Pudding without flames, please, papa."

"I thought so," said Mr. Howard, "and that my Katie would be disappointed to go without the birthday plum-pudding, merely because papa would not let her burn herself. What shall you find to amuse yourselves with all this afternoon, children? for it is far too cold for you to go out of doors. March has come in like a lion this year, has it not, Aunt Emma?"

But before Aunt Emma could answer, Lucy said, "What do you mean, Mr. Howard? How can a month be like a lion?"

"Why, Lucy, it is an old saying, and old sayings are often very true and very wise, that 'When March comes in like a lion, it goes out like a lamb.' So you see it is compared to two animals, not one only, and it must mean that the early part of March is very often blustering and rough and biting and howling and stormy, like a fierce animal; and then it changes, and the wind hushes down, and the air becomes soft and calm, and the little birds begin to sing, and the tiny green leaves begin to come again, and all is gentle and quiet then as a lamb."

"Papa," asked Rosie, "are any of the other months like animals?"

"I don't think so, dear, but most of the other months have some feature peculiar to themselves. February, for instance, used to be called 'February

fill dyke,' because a great deal of rain generally falls in February ; and March, the month we were talking about, has another saying belonging to it, which is this, 'A peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom,' that means to say that a dry, dusty, keen March is a great blessing to the country, and makes the land in a good state for the farmers to sow the seeds."

"But papa," said Katie, "what does ransom mean?"

"It means, dear, that in days gone by, when prisoners were taken in war, a great sum of money used to be paid by their country or their friends to get them back again out of the enemy's hands ; and if a king was taken prisoner, as has happened sometimes, then a very large sum of money was demanded by those who had taken him prisoner, before he was restored to his own country and his own people."

"Oh, papa, we have just been reading such a pretty story about Richard, the brave Richard, the lion-hearted King, who was taken prisoner by the cruel King of the French, and shut up somewhere, no one knew where, till he was found out by his faithful favourite minstrel Blondell playing the harp under the window of a dungeon, and Richard's voice answered and sung to him from within."

"Yes, my little Rosie," said her papa, "this is a very pretty story, and very true, too."

"Oh!" said Katie, "we know it is all quite true,

because we read it in our book of history stories a few days ago."

"I am tired of sitting," here murmured tiny Agnes, and at this murmur Aunt Emma came to her rescue, and lifted her out of her chair, and began playing with her, which put an end to the conversation about months and ransom and prisoners.

Before Mr. Howard left the room, he asked Aunt Emma if this was not the very day that Mrs. Long was to arrive.

"Yes, it is," said Aunt Emma, "but not till to-night, and after the children are gone to bed. She could not manage to come by an early train, and she begged no carriage might be sent for her, because her movements were necessarily uncertain."

"I am so glad I shall be in bed before she comes," whispered Katie to Edith. "I know she must come, but still I wish it was not for a long, long time."

"Katie," answered Rose, in a low voice, "do you know that we too are to have a governess?—it is a secret, but yet I know it, because Nurse told Mary Jones, her niece, who comes to work for us, when I was in the room, that mamma had told her that she was going to have a governess for us almost immediately."

"Are you sorry?" then asked Katie.

"Yes, Katie, I am very sorry. I don't like lessons, and I shall have to do such quantities when a governess comes."

"What are you two little girls whispering together about?" said Aunt Emma, coming up to them. "The others are gone up to play in the school-room. Won't you go too?—have you settled the affairs of state yet, or shall I leave you here to finish settling them?"

"Aunt Emma, Edith was telling me a secret, and so you must not know it, nor ask me what it is, for I shan't tell you if you do."

"I shan't ask you, my little Katie, because a secret is a secret, and not to be told; and do you think you could answer me this question before you go, 'In what colour must you keep a secret?'"

"Oh, a riddle! a riddle!" said both the little girls. "Tell us, Aunt Emma, please; we can't find it out; and then we can ask the others."

"The answer is 'Inviolable,'" said Aunt Emma. "So, Katie, that is how you are to keep all good secrets that are committed to you; and the fewer you have, the better, my child; now run off."

And away they ran, burning to ask the riddle they had just learned before they had forgotten it, and neither of them understanding in the least what it meant. Of course they asked it, and of course they told the answer. When this was done, in walked Miss Agnes with Lucy's bonnet and scarlet cloak on, and a fur muff, and black lace veil, looking so extremely ridiculous that she set all the children screaming with laughter and amusement, and put it into their heads
ess up.

"Oh!" said Rose, let us be lions, and be like those children papa took us to see in the Royal Academy one day when we were in London, in a picture."

This picture was Millais' beautiful one called "The Wolf's Den," and it had made a great impression on Rose and Kate. So now they must needs try and copy this picture.

Rose ran to get a great fur cloak of papa's out of the hall; and though this cloak was so heavy she could scarcely carry it, she was not content with it alone, but was trying also to drag with it up-stairs a large bear-skin rug for the carriage; but her strength was unequal to the task, so sitting down on the stairs she called out to Kate and Edith to come and help her. They heard her call, and they came, and, between them, they managed to get their treasures safely up into the school-room; and then they did have fun. Lucy forgot all her promises to keep quiet and still; she rolled herself up in the bear-skin rug, and jumped convulsively about the room, and the others after her, in different strange attires, and then they squatted under the large table in the middle of the school-room, and laughed, and screamed, and chased each other round and round. At length, the uproar became so great that almost at the same time nurses, Aunt Emma, and Mr. Howard, all came in.

"Heyday, children," said Mr. Howard, "what are you up to? What can be the cause of all this riot? I thought you were trying to shake the house down."

"It is only us, playing at lions, papa," said Rosie, peeping from under the table, her face flushed, and her long golden hair tossed about, and her little body wrapped round and round in papa's great fur cloak; "and I'm going to eat you up, papa; do take care."

"Indeed I must take care, Rosie, for you are, no doubt, a terribly fierce lion," answered Mr. Howard, who was very much amused at the scene. But though he was amused, Nurse was not, for she was thinking what a mess the children were making themselves in, and what a deal of work they were making for her to do, and she looked very cross, and was so glad to hear Mrs. Campbell's nurse say—"We shall have Miss Lucy as bad as ever; I can see she will make her leg worse; what worrits children are, to be sure."

Aunt Emma overheard this rather ungracious speech, and being uneasy in her mind about Lucy, she went up to Mr. Howard, and said, "Will you stop this rough play? it won't do for Lucy." So Mr. Howard then called out, "Now, little girls, no more of this; come out of your holes, and out of your dens, and let us have a little peace."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Katie, "mayn't we have some more fun? Do please let us, we are so happy."

"You must be happy some other way, my child, this play is too rough. Why, what a strange little object you have made yourself! Nurse, will you brush this disordered hair, and make your little ladies tidy,

and then I dare say, children, kind Aunt Emma will take you all into her room till tea is ready."

"I don't want to go into Aunt Emma's room, I want to play," answered Miss Katie.

"And so do I," chimed in Edith, and Lucy, and Rosie.

"Now, dears, I won't have any more of this rough play; so do what I tell you. Go to Nurse to be made tidy, and then, dear Aunt Emma, will you have them?"

"Yes, I will," said Aunt Emma.

"Thank you, Aunt Emma," replied Mr. Howard. "Let me see which of you will be ready first."

Still Katie and Lucy were unwilling to go, or to give up the thought of more play. But Mr. Howard was quite resolved to carry his point, and so he stayed waiting and looking steadily at Katie.

In a minute or two the little girl got up, and, turning to Lucy, she said, "Come, Lucy, let us go, and not keep papa waiting for us to be good." She then went up to her papa, and said, "Kiss me, papa; I will go like a good child, and not mind because we mayn't play here any longer."

"That's right, my Katie. I am so glad you have conquered that rebellious spirit of yours, and are willing to do as I wish you. Mrs. Long will never give you a more difficult lesson to learn than that one, which I am so anxious to teach you, called 'Prompt Obedience;' and yet, my darling, it is my duty to teach, and yours to learn, this lesson, and the quicker you

learn it the happier you will be. Now you can both go to the nursery to be made tidy, and then to Aunt Emma's room."

As they went, Lucy would keep saying—"I wish we had been let alone to do as we liked. How tiresome it is that we mayn't play."

Katie made no answer to these murmurings of the more self-willed Miss Lucy, but ran on straight away into the nursery. In a short time she and Lucy had joined the others in Aunt Emma's room; and Lucy recovered her temper when she found that a nice cosy place had been made for her to lie down on the sofa near the fire, and that she was to cut out, with a beautiful sharp pair of scissors, some thin cardboard letters which the other little girls had been sitting round the table tracing. Tiny Agnes was to be the messenger appointed to carry the letters to Lucy as she lay on the sofa, as fast as the others traced them. These letters Aunt Emma said were for a long text which she had promised Mr. Neville to do before Easter, and which he wanted to put round the room where the Sunday School was held. The text was to be in white letters on a crimson ground. The children, who had never done anything of the kind before, were very much pleased at being trusted to trace and cut out these letters.

"Aunty, read to us," said one, "or tell us a story," said another; "yes, pray do, pray do," came from a third, and so on.

Then Aunt Emma opened a book, and began to read as follows :—

“Once upon a time, and a very long time ago, the town of Hamelin, in Brunswick, was infested by a plague of rats. There were, in fact, more rats than townspeople, and the race of cats was exterminated. So the mayor and council met to discuss the matter, and to decide what was best to be done. In the midst of their conference in came a little gnome-like creature, clad in yellow and red, carrying a flageolet in his hand ; and this queer little piper offered to spirit the rats clean away for the small consideration of one thousand guilders, that is, about one hundred pounds of our money. The mayor was only too glad to close with him, the bargain was struck, the piper set up a quaint melody, and out came the rats from cellar and sewer, garret and basement, red rats, grey rats, black rats, rats of all ages, sizes, and colours, and followed the piper by thousands through the main streets of the town, right down to the banks of the river Weser, where they all plunged in and perished like the host of Pharaoh. Well, when all the rats were drowned, and not even a tail of one was left behind, the mayor repented of his liberality, and declined to sign the order of payment for the thousand guilders.

“‘You shall have ten guilders,’ said he, ‘and a bottle of wine ; but when we talked of paying a thousand, it was only by way of a joke.’

“ ‘Is that your last word on the matter, Mr. Mayor?’ asked the piper.

“ ‘It is our last word,’ replied the mayor and councillors, all together.

“ So the piper made a bow, more in mockery than in reverence, flung the ten guilders on the floor, put his pipe once again to his lips, and walked straight to the middle of the market-place, where he took up his station, and began playing the most beautiful tune that ever was heard in Hamelin before or since. No sooner, however, had he begun to play than such a pattering of little feet, such a clapping of little hands, and such bursts of ringing laughter filled the air, that the piper’s music was nearly silenced in the hubbub. And whence came all this riot, do you suppose? Why from all the children in the town, from the children who came trooping like the rats, by scores and hundreds, with their fair hair all fluttering behind them, and their little cheeks flushed with pleasure—from the children who escaped from mothers and nurses at the sound of the pipe, and followed the piper as the rats had followed him all down the main street, and out by the winding wall which led down to the Weser, only he had not the heart to drown the pretty babes; he led them into a valley at the foot of a great black mountain about half a league from the walls of the town, and the side of the mountain opened to receive the children, and there they all are to this day, shut up in the granite heart of the black mountain, wait-

ing till the piper shall relent from his vengeance, and shall take them back again to the town."

The story was finished, and Aunt Emma shut the book.

"Oh, aunty," cried Rosie, "what a cruel piper! Oh how glad I am I did not live in that town."

"But," said Edith, "are the little children there now? had they any food to eat, or are they dead?"

"They never lived at all, of course," said Lucy. "Things of this sort that we read of in books are not true; are they now, Aunt Emma?"

"They are dreadfully interesting," exclaimed Rosie, "whether they are true or not. But are they true, aunty?"

"Dear Rosie, I don't think this is true; but I read it to you because I think that if you all had followed out your whims and your wishes to go on playing those rough games, you would have come to some trouble, even as the rats and the children did. Lucy would most certainly have made herself lame again; and the consequence of that would have been that she and Edith would not be allowed to come here for a long time; Lucy would have had pain, and her mamma and papa anxiety and trouble; and you, Rosie and Katie, would have been so sorry, and so vexed, and so would all of us. Therefore, dears, it was a very good thing that you could not follow the piper, or your own wills and wishes; and so you see you all are sitting here quiet and good, instead of being shut up in the

heart of the black mountain. That bell is the summons for tea ; so you must now go, and I hope one little girl will bring me in a cup of tea, by way of payment for my story."

"*I will,*" "*I will,*" "*I will,*" cried many voices.

"And a piece of plum cake, too, for I know there is to be one," said Katie.

"No cake, thank you, dear Katie," said Aunt Emma, "but a kiss from my little pets, which will be sweeter than cake—and a good cup of tea."

Soon after tea the three Campbell children went home, and Katie and Rosie went to bed, thoroughly tired, and very curious to know when Mrs. Long would arrive.

CHAPTER II.

THE very first question Rose and Kate asked Nurse the next morning, when she awakened them, was, "Did Mrs. Long come last night?"

"She did," answered Nurse, "quite late, and she will breakfast this morning in the dining-room with your papa and Aunt Emma, and you are to have breakfast for one more day in the nursery with me; and as it is the last morning, old Nursie is going to give her pets a treat."

"What, Nursie dear, what?" cried they both.

"You shall see, darlings, when breakfast comes."

So they made great haste to get up and dress, being much excited both about Mrs. Long and also about Nursie's treat for breakfast. And when at length all was done, and the little bright girls went marching into the day nursery, there they were greeted by such a nice cheerful fire, and a table spread with an unusual quantity of things. Down they sat, and what, think you, was it that Nurse had got ready for them? Two small, white, fresh-laid eggs, some thin toast, and some strawberry jam.

"It is a feast fit for princesses or fairies!" said Rosie, clapping her hands.

And they both enjoyed the feast very much; for Mr. Howard did not allow his children to be brought up daintily and luxuriously—their ordinary breakfast was only bread and milk, or porridge; so that this kind of breakfast was really something quite unusual for them.

By and by the bell rang for prayers: both the children felt rather shy and unwilling to go down, because of Mrs. Long; they hesitated and stayed till the very last moment, then running downstairs they just caught Mr. Howard as he went into the hall, where the family always assembled for prayers, and he gave each a hand, and took them in with him, and placed them beside him whilst he read. Mrs. Long was sitting behind them, so they could not see her.

After prayers, and when the servants had left the room, Mr. Howard led them both up to Mrs. Long, and introduced them to one another. "This is Rose, my seven-year old child, and your eldest pupil, Mrs. Long; and this is Kate, my six-year old bairn, and my youngest," said Mr. Howard.

Mrs. Long then took each by the hand, and kissed them very gently, saying—"I hope we shall soon be great friends, dears, and do you know I have a little girl of four years old?"

"What is her name?" asked Rosie.

"Her name is Alice, and she has blue eyes and long bright hair like yours," replied Mrs. Long.

"Dear little thing, I hope we shall see her some day," said Katie, feeling much more at her ease with the new governess, now that she knew she had a little girl called Alice.

"Breakfast is on the table," said the butler at this moment, with great solemnity.

And whilst the elders went in to breakfast, the children were left to have a good game of play in the hall ; for the snow was now falling fast and thick, and darkening the air, so that there was no chance of any out-of-door exercise that day.

It was about eleven o'clock before Aunt Emma and Mrs. Long came into the hall again, where the children were still playing and tossing up their shuttlecocks.

"And now, dears," said Aunt Emma, "I should like you to show Mrs. Long the school-room, and tell her about your lessons, and what you used to do with Miss Jones, so that to-morrow you may be ready to begin in good earnest."

"Then are we to have a holiday to-day, Aunt?" asked Rose.

"No, Rosie, not a holiday, because you have had more than enough holidays lately ; but this shall be your settling-day, and you must do both music and work to-day, and make the school-room thoroughly tidy, for I am afraid it is in a state of great disorder."

So the children and Mrs. Long went upstairs, and really, before that day came to an end, they were quite good friends, and disposed to like each other very much.

Mrs. Long had to answer innumerable questions about her little Alice, and she told them interesting things about India and its hot sun, and its lions, and snakes, and black people, and a great deal which seemed to her young listeners exceedingly wonderful. And she told them, as they were standing by the window, watching the snow quietly falling, and covering up everything with its pure shining mantle, how some little girls that she knew, and who had been born in India, and lived there till they were six and seven years old, and then had been sent to England to some friends of their mothers, how the first time they saw snow they could not make out what it was, and they were so delighted with it, and thought it so beautiful, that they packed up a large parcel of it to send to India by the next ship, to show their mamma what snow was. And then their aunt, with whom they lived, made them put this large packed-up parcel of snow into a basin by the fire, and lo ! the snow all went away, and there was nothing but dark cold water left in the basin. They were so dreadfully disappointed—they could scarcely help crying.

“What funny little girls,” said Katie, “they must be ; only fancy packing up that cold, cold snow !—but is there no snow in India ?”

"Yes, Katie, there is, but not in that part of India where these little girls had lived. India is an immense country and has very high mountains, and on those mountains snow does fall and does rest, but not on the plains."

"Oh ! Mrs. Long," here interrupted Katie, "do you see papa out there in the snow ? How droll he looks ; his hat and coat are getting whiter and whiter every moment ; and old Nero too, his shaggy black coat will be covered up and made quite white soon. See how he shakes himself, funny old dog !"

And so they stayed at the window, talking about the snow, and watching Mr. Howard and Nero, till it began to get dark ; then Mrs. Long and Katie went to the fire, and chatted to each other about Alice and different things ; and they did not notice that little Rosie never moved from the window, but stood there watching and watching.

By and by Aunt Emma came in to see how they were getting on. She missed Rosie, and asked where she was.

"In the window," answered Kate.

And to the window Aunt Emma went, and sure enough there was Rosie, her eyes full of tears, and her forehead pressed against the cold window-pane, and her little body shaking and shivering.

"What is the matter, my pet ?" asked Aunt Emma, putting her arms round the quaking child, and taking her away from the window ; "tell aunty what is making you unhappy, darling !"

"Oh, aunty, aunty, papa is out in all that snow, and will he be killed? I have been watching for him, but I can't see him anywhere. I wish he would come back. Oh, will he be killed?"

"Papa is quite safe, my sweet child," said Aunt Emma, holding Rosie tight in her kind arms, and kissing her tears away. "You need not be unhappy about him, he is in no danger of any kind. What makes you think he was?"

"But is he come back, aunty? will he soon come back?" sobbed out the child, by no means pacified.

"He is not come back, dear one, because he had a good way to go, but I have no doubt he will be back very soon."

"Then he won't lie down in the snow and die, as I heard Nursie say many people do?"

"No, Rosie, he certainly will not. When people lie down in the snow and die, it is when they are too weary, and too cold, and too exhausted, to stand up and walk; then, if they do sink down or go to sleep, it is true they never can rise again, but are found dead. But that very seldom happens in the middle of England, because the cold is not so intense, nor the snow so deep as it is in mountainous parts of the country. So dry those little eyes of yours, my child, and come nearer to the fire, and tell me all Nursie said to you; for I am sure she could not have intended frightening you in this way."

"Aunty, she told me about her little nephew, who

never, never came home one night ; his mother watched for him, and waited for him, and got ready some hot porridge, and put it on the hob for him, but he never came, and it snowed and snowed, and the wind blew and howled all the night long, and little Alick never came home—never again. For the next day his father and mother were looking all day for him, but they could not find him, and the next, and the next ; and then they thought he must be dead, and so he was ; for ten days after he was lost, they found him lying under a rock cold and dead, and Nursie said he must have laid himself down to go to sleep, and never woke. Oh, aunty ! wasn't it sad ?—poor little Alick ! and Nursie told me that that same winter two shepherds were killed by the snow, and never came back again to their own homes. And this is what has made me so frightened about my own papa."

"Listen, Rosie," then said Aunt Emma ; "what do you hear?"

"Oh !" cried the child. "I hear Nero barking, and papa's voice. He is come back ! he is come back !"

"Yes, darling, he is ; and I am sure Mrs. Long will let you come down with me to meet him in the hall, and to see with your own eyes that he is all safe and well."

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Long, "she may certainly go downstairs, and I am only so grieved that she did

not tell me of her trouble ; but we shall know each other better in a little while, and not be shy, as we are now."

So downstairs and into the hall went Aunt Emma and Rosie, and there, under the portico and outside the great glass door, stood Mr. Howard, shaking and stamping and knocking the snow from off his coat ; and Nero, who could not make out what his master could be doing, was barking and jumping up at him, and making a great noise. And when Mr. Howard did open the hall door and come in, he did not come in alone, though he took care that wet, snow-covered Nero should not creep in, as he would most gladly have done, but it was a blast of keen, cold, east wind that came in with him—wind that blew Rosie's long curls all about and twisted them round her neck, and made her shiver and her teeth chatter.

"Oh ! how cold," said she and Aunt Emma, both together.

"It is, indeed, cold," echoed Mr. Howard ; "but what has brought you and my Rosie down into the hall at this time of day ? You, Aunt Emma, are generally snug in your own room, writing or reading at this hour ; and you, my child, are generally at tea in the school-room."

"Why the reason of this," said Aunt Emma, "is that your Rosie was making herself very unhappy about papa, and did not like you to be out so long in the snow ; so when we heard you coming up to the

house, we came to meet you, and to see that you had really come back all safe and sound, and had not been hurt by the snow."

"Did my Rosie think papa was not old enough to take care of himself, then?" said her father, sitting down in a great arm-chair by the side of the fire, and taking his little girl on his lap, and kissing her tenderly.

"No, dear papa, I did not think that. I know you are very old indeed, but Nursie had been telling me how dangerous it was for people to be out in the snow, and so I did so want you to come in."

"Well, my pet, here I am, and you have got your very old father back again quite safe, and he was not in any danger at all: but now we will not stay any longer in this cold hall; at another time you shall tell me all that Nurse said to you about the snow, but not just now, because I must put on some dryer and warmer clothes, and I have also letters to write before dinner." So after a great many more kisses, he took her up to the school-room, and in a little while she was as bright and happy again as ever.

The next morning, before Mr. Howard was dressed, both the little girls ran into his room, saying, "Oh, papa! papa! what do you think has happened? Poor little Elsie Lane has been nearly frozen to death!"

"One at a time, dears," said Mr. Howard. "I

can't make out what you say when you both talk so fast at once. Rosie, you are the eldest, so tell me what has happened to Elsie."

"She fell into the brook, papa, and would have been frozen to death, Nurse says, only John Jones, our gamekeeper, happened to come by, and saw her fall in, and picked her out of the water, and carried her home."

"But, papa," chimed in Katie, "Nurse says she was almost dead when John Jones found her, and she has been lying out of her spirit ever since."

"I suppose, out of her spirit, means insensible, my little Kate; but, dears, this is a very sad story indeed, and I will send for John Jones immediately after prayers, and hear what he has got to say, and I will go myself down to the lodge as soon as ever I can, and see the child."

"May we go, papa? may we go? pray do let us. Nurse says she shall go, and mayn't we go with her?"

"You could not go, my dear children; the snow is so deep in places, that it would be impossible for you to get down to the lodge till a path has been made. You must wait till I come back, and till I see both how the child is, and how the roads are; and then, if it is fine this afternoon, and possible for you to go, you shall do so, for I know how anxious you must be about poor little Elsie. But there is the prayer-bell; so come down with me."

Immediately after prayers, Mr. Howard sent for

the gamekeeper. He soon came ; and whilst Mr. Howard was talking to him in the hall, the door-bell rang, and in came Dr. Birch.

"Oh, Dr. Birch," cried both children, "how is Elsie, dear little Elsie ? is she frozen ? may we go to see her ? will she ever be well again ?"

"Now, my children, be quiet," said their father ; "let me speak to Dr. Birch, and then you can hear what he says. How is the poor little thing, doctor, and can we do anything for her ?"

"Well," said the doctor, "she is very ill ; a few more minutes in that cold water, and we could never have brought back life again ; she is still insensible, and in great danger ; but I hope she may recover. It seems from Mrs. Walker's account that she very often returns home from school through the fields, and over that little wooden bridge which leads across the brook, and into the lane at the back of the lodge, it being a shorter way than by the road ; but generally some of the other children have come with her. Yesterday she was alone, and the planks were covered with frozen snow, and very slippery ; the rails of the bridge too are broken, and she must have slipped down on the bridge and fallen through into the stream between the broken rails."

"Yes, sir," said John Jones, who had been standing by, listening, "I reckon that's just how it happened. I saw the poor little lassie tripping on before me through the snow. I knew her by her scarlet cloak,

of which she was mighty proud, and suddenly I lost sight of her, and I thought I heard a scream. 'Something's amiss,' says I to myself, and I hurried on as fast as my legs could carry me, till I came to the bridge, and there I stood, and looked one way, and t'other way, and up and down the lane, but I could not see a speck of anything; when, just at that moment, some scarlet in the water caught my eye. 'Bless my heart,' I exclaimed, all aloud to myself, 'it's the lassie in the water,' and in I jumped, for it was none so deep for a big fellow like me, and waded and waded till I came to her. I did not look to see whether she was dead or alive, but, covering her up, I ran, as I did not think I ever could have run, to Mother Walker's cottage, and laid her down on the rug by the fire; and I said, 'Mother Walker, she's a been in the brook, get her into a warm bed, and I'll be off for the doctor;' and so I went, and I found the doctor in, sir."

"Yes, and a very good thing it was that you did find me in, John Jones; for Mrs. Walker was at her wits' ends to know what to do when I got to the cottage, and crying into the bargain, and in such a fluster. I stayed an hour with her, and we got warmth back by degrees, and the action of the heart; but the brain is a good deal affected, and that is the danger now. My Mary, who is a capital nurse, and very fond of that little motherless bairn, is gone to watch over her to-day, and to carry out all my directions."

"How kind and good of Miss Mary," said Rosie ; "she will take care of Elsie, as she did of us when we had our accident."

"Is not your daughter Mary wanted at home?" asked Mr. Howard, "because Nurse can very well be spared, and would like to go and take care of little Elsie, and she could stay all night with the child."

"Thank you, Mr. Howard, but I am sure Mary would not resign her post, not even to Nurse. She is downright fond of nursing, and has a special love for pretty, dark-eyed Elsie. One of the neighbours has offered to come and take Mary's place for the night—that Mrs. Collins, who is always ready to go and help anybody in the village who is sick—and she will do, I know, exactly what I tell her ; so that really no more help is wanted. As for these little ladies, they must not think of going down to the lodge to-day ; the road is terribly bad, and very unsafe ; and you see it is beginning to sleet and snow and rain again. But you shall hear, my dears, in the course of the day, how she is going on, and it might be as well, perhaps, if you would make her a very warm flannel petticoat, she will want it by and by. Mary did say she should be glad of another blanket or two, Mr. Howard, if you could let her have them."

"Yes, she shall have them at once," said Aunt Emma, "and some good Scotch broth, which the children were to have had for their dinner, shall be

sent down for Miss Birch and Mrs. Walker, and our little ones must do with something else."

"Yes, dear aunty, anything will do for us," said Rosie, "do send our dinner."

"I must be off, however," said Dr. Birch, "I have a good deal to do to-day, cold as it is."

"Are you going by the lodge, or the other way?" asked Mr. Howard.

"By the lodge, for I promised Mary I would look in upon them again before I started for my distant patients."

"Then, doctor, will you give me a lift as far as the lodge, and I can walk back?"

"Yes, gladly, Mr. Howard," answered the doctor, "if you are not afraid of facing this black day."

"Oh, no! I am not afraid," said Mr. Howard. "Aunt Emma, I shall be in before luncheon, if Mr. Neville calls to see me, as I think he will. Good bye, darlings, and don't be fretting about papa to-day, my Rosie."

At luncheon time Mr. Howard was in, and able to speak more hopefully of Elsie, though she was still in much danger. The children could talk and think of nothing else, and were as pleased as though they had had a great treat when only cold beef came up for their dinner, instead of the hot hodge-podge which they were to have had, and which had been sent down to the lodge. As they could not go out because of the sleet and rain, they worked away most diligently at

the warm flannel petticoat for Elsie, and Mrs. Long read to them whilst they worked.

For many days the little Elsie lay between life and death, and Rose and Kate were kept in a great state of keen interest about her. Mary Birch watched and nursed her by day, and Mrs. Collins by night, and all her wants were supplied by the Howards. .

At length Dr. Birch pronounced her out of danger: still she needed great care, and to be kept quiet and amused. He could not allow "the little ladies," as Elsie always called Rose and Kate, to see her; he was so afraid that they would excite the child too much in their joy and delight; but, in order to pacify them, he asked them to dress her a doll, and to send it to her with their love, when it was dressed; and that very afternoon they both went with Mrs. Long to a shop in a little town about a mile off, and got a very nice india-rubber doll, which would not break, and all the materials which they would want to dress it nicely. Then, when they got home, they set to work. It was to have a pink gingham frock, a white pinafore, a corded petticoat, a little grey cloak, and a straw hat; and everything was to be made to take off and on, so that Elsie might amuse herself by dressing and undressing dolly as many times in the day as she liked. Nurse and Mrs. Long both helped in making the clothes, so that in two days dolly was beautifully dressed from tip to toe; and Mr. Howard carried it

down to the lodge himself, and gave it to the little gipsy girl, as she lay on her bed.

This accident made quite a change in Elsie's life, for she continued so delicate and shaken in health, that Dr. Birch said it would not do for her to be sent to school, and she wanted more good food and warm clothes than Mrs. Walker could anyhow afford to give her : so Mr. Howard asked the housekeeper and Nurse whether they would be willing to take charge of the child for a year, and by that time she would, perhaps, have become strong enough to be allowed to go to school again. The housekeeper and the nurse said that they should like to talk the matter over, and to think about it ; and Mr. Howard said that he should wish them to do so, because if the child came to live at the Hall for a year, she must not be neglected, nor made unhappy, but be properly cared for and kindly treated.

They talked together, and they talked to Aunt Emma about the matter, and they came to the decision that they would undertake the charge of her. While this affair was pending not a word was said to the children about it, but as soon as it was settled Nurse told them, and mightily pleased they were.

"Where is she to sleep, Nursie?" was the first question. "And is she to breakfast and dine with us?" was the next.

"She is to sleep," said Nurse, "in a tiny room which opens out of Mrs. Salt's (the housekeeper), and

she is to have all her meals in the housekeeper's room. She shall often play with you, my dears, and sometimes walk with you ; but she is not to be brought up as you both are, because that would not be right. She is a poor child, and will have to earn her livelihood, and become a servant some day ; and we must not take her out of that station in which God has placed her, for any whim of ours. But," added Nurse, " you may teach her to read and write, and to spell, when she gets a little stronger and more able to attend, and teach her some of your pretty hymns and verses, and the catechism."

"Oh, yes, Nursie," exclaimed Katie, "she shall be our pupil, and we will have a Sunday School of our own on Sunday, and Elsie shall be the scholar."

"But that won't be quite fair upon Elsie," said Nurse, "because there will be just two teachers and one pupil ; but there will be time enough to settle all about the lessons when she comes. And now, my dears, you must run down to the school-room : Mrs. Long will be wondering what has become of you. I hear the school-room door opening, perhaps she is coming to look for you : so be off at once."

And off they ran, full of their plans and thoughts for Elsie, which were all poured into Mrs. Long's ear.

CHAPTER III.

A MONTH went on very quietly and very happily : the lessons were done steadily and cheerfully, and Mrs. Long and her pupils had become quite attached to each other. Bitter, biting, keen March was passed ; and April, with its clouds and sunshine, its smiles and tears, was come. Easter fell late this year, and to Easter the children were looking forward with great joy. They had been taught that Easter was a time of solemn holy rejoicing, but, child-like, the real gladness of Easter was as yet unknown to them ; it was the Easter holidays that they were so longing for, for Sue, sister Sue, was coming home then for a fortnight, and another girl with her, an entire stranger, and as old as Susan, Grace Richmond by name. Walter, too, was coming home, and with him a cousin, who was at the same school, Reginald Owen.

"Only two more days, Mrs. Long," said Rosie, "and they will all be here."

"So they will, dear," answered Mrs. Long ; "and I am going away in two days for a fortnight."

"Going away, dear Mrs. Long ! oh, I am so sorry,

and you won't see Sue or Walter, nor Grace Richmond, nor our cousin Reginald."

"No, Rosie, I am afraid I shall not see any of them, but I shall see my own dear sweet little Alice, and I want to see her so very much, and she wants to see her mamma too, and keeps asking, when I am coming, and why I don't come at once, and immediately."

"Poor little Alice! If I had a mamma I am sure I should not like to be away from her. I should cry dreadfully if I went away from Aunt Emma and Nursie, because they have always been my mammas; but why do you go away from little Alice, Mrs. Long?"

"Because, Rosie, it is right, and my duty to leave her just now; and if a thing must be done, it must, whether we like it or not."

"But, Mrs. Long, do grown-up people ever have anything to do that they don't like? I thought it was only children who had things to do that they don't want to do."

"Oh, Rosie! you are still a child, and therefore you think as a child; but when you become a woman, you will know that every one has a great many things to do which he or she doesn't like doing, and a great many things to bear which are sometimes very hard to bear."

"But not papa and Aunt Emma, Mrs. Long; they never do anything but what they like—do they?"

They never cry and are unhappy, like all children are ? ”

“ My dear Rosie, it is natural to children to cry and to make a fuss about very little matters, and sometimes to be very unhappy, but not often, except they are very naughty, disobedient, and self-willed ; but grown-up people have been obliged to learn self-control, and don't fret and cry in the same way ; but nevertheless they are oftentimes very unhappy ; and I know that your dear Aunt Emma never thinks whether she likes to do such and such a thing, but whether it is her duty to do it, and if it is her duty then she does it, and I am certain it is the same with Mr. Howard. And so perhaps, dear, you will understand better than you did before we had this little talk about duty, why I have left my darling Alice and her papa, and am here as your governess. But I have something to tell you which I think will please you, and it is this, that Mr. Howard has invited my little Alice to come and pay you a visit, and so, when I return to you after the Easter holidays, I shall bring her back with me.”

“ Oh, how nice ! how nice ! ” said Rosie, clapping her hands, and jumping with joy ; “ and then when she comes, we can teach her her letters, when we teach Elsie, and she shall come with Elsie to our Sunday-school.”

“ She knows her letters, dear, and she can spell little words, but you shall teach her some more. But

what do you think she said to me the day before I left her?"

"What, Mrs. Long? Do tell me!"

"She wasn't very good, Rosie, that morning, and would not attend. She had spelt some of her words, and then I asked her what does C A T spell, and she would say 'dog;' so I said, 'No, Alice, that's not right: try again; you knew it yesterday; C A T?' 'Dog,' she answered again, with such a saucy look in her eye. Then I said, 'We won't have any more lessons to-day, because Alice won't attend.' So I got up and was going away, when she said, 'Mamma, I shall never say C A T spells "cat," but always "dog," so you need not ask me again.' And away she went, looking so determined."

"What a naughty little Alice," said Rosie. "Did you punish her?"

"No, Rosie, I could not punish her, because I was going away from her the next day, and in the afternoon I had been out for a long walk, and was lying down on the sofa tired after my walk, when my little child came creeping into the room, and laid herself down by me; at first she took my hand, and began to kiss it, and then went on to stroke my face, and at last she said—'Mamma, Alice is very sorry she was naughty at her lessons; but, mamma, it was partly my fun, and C A T spells "cat."' Then she said—'Bless you, my own dear mamma. I am so

fond of you, I love you as much as a thousand worlds' full ; and I am so sorry you are going away ; and who is to make me good when you are gone ?' When she said this, she began to cry so bitterly, Rosie, that I could scarcely quiet her, and I promised her that I would try and come back very soon again ; and so I wrote to her to-day to tell her that in two more days, mamma would come back ; and I don't know which is most pleased at the thought, mamma or Alice."

"I am so glad now that you are going, dear Mrs. Long, and that you will not be here to see Susan and Walter, and the others."

And in two days after this, Mrs. Long went away. She left quite early in the morning, and it was not till six in the evening of that same day that Susan and Grace Richmond were expected, and not till nine, much later still, that Walter and his cousin were to arrive.

It was a beautiful day—just such a day as good old Herbert once described, "As a bridal of the earth and sky." The birds were singing their songs of joy ; each hour seemed to make the hedges more green ; and the soft west wind blew so fresh and sweet, as though it was coming straight from the gates of Heaven. The children were playing in the garden, when their father came to them, and said—"I am going to take you both out for a drive in the pony-carriage this beautiful morning. Luncheon

won't be till two, so we shall have plenty of time for a long drive. Aunt Emma is coming with us. Run off to Nurse, and be made ready ; the carriage will be at the door in a quarter of an hour."

"But, papa, will the pony run away again, and shall we come home killed?"

"I hope not, dear Katie," said her papa; "this new pony has never run away, and I think papa can drive you safely."

"Shall we meet the great dog?" asked Rose.

"No, you certainly won't, my child—you need not be in the least afraid; but be off, for you have no time to spare."

So away they ran.

"Nurse, please make us ready for the pony carriage. Papa says the pony won't run away, and the great dog won't bark at us."

"No, Miss Kate; this new pony is as safe as can be, our coachman says, not skittish at all, as the other one was; and then master can drive any animal. I am not a bit afraid of your going out with him; so, bless your little hearts, don't you be a going and frightening yourselves—take Nursie's word, it is all right, and master will bring you back safe."

The children were ready by the time the carriage was at the door, and they were tucked nicely in the back seat, and Aunt Emma and Mr. Howard in front; a groom rode behind them on horseback, to open the gates, and hold the pony, if it were necessary

to do so. On they went, through the park and down the lanes.

"Oh, stop, do stop, papa!" cried both the children at once, the first bank bright with primroses that they came to; "let us get out and gather those lovely primroses—they are the first we have seen this year."

So papa stopped, and the groom came to the pony's head, and Mr. Howard got out himself, and lifted the children out, and on, and on, down the lane they went, gathering such numbers of those sweet inviting flowers, and now and then finding a still more inviting purple scented violet.

When they were satisfied, they got into the carriage again and went on their way. By and by they came to a beautiful, wide stretching, fresh, breezy common; and how the pony did enjoy a good three miles' trot across it, and how the children, and Aunt Emma, and Mr. Howard did enjoy the soft-blowing, sweet west wind, which was dancing around them all the way, lifting up the children's long falling hair, twisting the feathers in their hats about just as it liked, fluttering their cloaks, and bringing such a fresh colour into their cheeks, that they were all right down sorry when they left the windy common and got back into the more shady lanes.

"And now, dears," said Mr. Howard, "I am going to drive you round by Mr. Seckar's house. I want to see Mr. Seckar, if he is at home, and I am quite sure you two little girls will not object to spending a

quarter of an hour with Mrs. Seckar and her three girls."

"Oh, no, papa, we shall like to go there very much, only they have such a strict governess that, often when we do go there, we can't see them, because they are at lessons and must not be disturbed; but perhaps, papa, you will ask Mrs. Seckar to let us see them, and then I dare say she will. I am very fond of them all three, but I like Florence the best, because she tells me such nice stories."

"Oh! but Rosie," said Kate, "I am sure Rose Seckar tells beautiful stories, better than any Florence can tell, and she is quite my pet; and besides, she told me one day, as a great secret, that she writes stories sometimes, and she has promised to read me one of her own writing, so I will ask her to read it to me to-day."

"But, Katie," said Mr. Howard, "I don't intend to stay long, only ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, at the most; so you had better not ask for the story to-day, because you will be disappointed, I know, if I call you to come before it is finished. Wait till another day, when you will have more time."

"But, papa," answered Katie, "Rose Seckar's stories are only short ones, because children's stories are never like grown-up people's. Rose's stories are always full of noises, and ghosts, and dreadful things."

"Well, my dear little Katie," said her father, "if you can tear yourself away from hearing about these

noises, and ghosts, and dreadful things, when I call you, I don't mind how you spend the time of your visit ; only, I must not have a cross face, or a murmuring voice, if I call you just as you are going to hear how the ghost did indeed come. And now we won't talk any more, but trot on briskly till we get to the house."

So saying, Mr. Howard touched the pony with the whip, and off it set at a quick rapid trot, and never relaxed its pace till they came very near to Mr. Seckar's house ; then Mr. Howard checked it, and he was not a little astonished to see two carriages standing at the door of the house, and quite a crowd collected around these carriages—all the people out of the village seemed to be there.

"What can be the matter?" said Aunt Emma.

"I can't imagine," answered Mr. Howard ; "but I will ask, for that something extraordinary has happened I feel sure. Will you take the reins, and the groom shall come to the pony's head, and I will go in and inquire."

"Oh, don't leave us, papa," said Rose ; "don't leave us in the midst of all these people. What can be the matter ? I am so frightened."

"My darling Rosie, I shan't be away a minute ; no harm will come to you ; and don't you want to know what has happened to your friends?"

"Yes, papa, I do want to know, very much indeed ; but I don't want you to go, nor to leave us."

"I must go, but I will be back as quickly as I can, and you must be a brave little girl in the meantime."

"Oh, here comes Dr. Birch, leaving the house,—he will tell us what has happened."

And Dr. Birch came up to them, looking very sad, and said, "I saw your pony carriage from the window, Mr. Howard, and I just came down to speak to you, and to tell you of the sad trouble which poor Mr. and Mrs. Seckar are in. Their youngest daughter, Rose, has met with a frightful accident."

"What! what! what!" cried both Rose and Kate, with blanched cheeks, and eyes full of tears.

"Shall I tell them?" asked Dr. Birch of Mr. Howard.

"Yes, you must tell them now; they won't be pacified till they do know, and it will come better from you than from me."

So Dr. Birch turned round again to the children, and said, "Rose has been knocked down by a ladder, and is very much hurt; how much, I don't know yet, but I shall know better by and by, and then I will either come to tell you, or send you word."

"But will she die?" burst out from Katie's lips; "will she die? Oh, Dr. Birch, do tell me!"

"Hush! Miss Katie, hush! don't sob so, dear. I hope she will not, but it will be as God wills; and you too, Miss Rose, don't cry, don't distress your dear papa and aunt. I promise you both to come and see you, and tell you more about her this evening; but

now I must go back to my poor suffering little patient." And Dr. Birch went away, leaving the children in the deepest distress.

In a minute or two their father, who had gone up to the house to inquire, returned and said, "My darlings, we will go home now ; it is very, very sad about this dear child. I shall call again this afternoon, and then I trust I may hear a better account of her, but just now every one is so much engrossed that I can hardly make out how matters really are. Now then, dears, are you ready, for I am going to start ?"

"Yes, papa, we are quite ready," answered two little sorrowful sobbing voices, and they started ; but the drive home was such a sad one. The children were deeply touched by what they had seen, and so was Mr. Howard by what he had both seen and heard ; and we know Aunt Emma quite well enough to feel sure she was sympathising with them all.

When they got home, the children rushed up to Nurse to tell their sad tale.

"Oh, Nursie, Nursie, dear sweet Rosie Seckar has had such a dreadful accident : a ladder has fallen upon her, and the doctors don't know whether she will live or die."

And then as soon as one had told her tale, the other began, and Nurse got quite bewildered with their voices and their tears, and their grief, and was so relieved when Aunt Emma came into the nursery and told her the facts, as far as she knew them about the accident,



and then took the children down-stairs with her. The dinner-bell had not rung, for it was not quite two o'clock yet, and so Rose and Kate went into the hall, both of them looking sad and troubled ; but children will be children, and smiles very soon follow tears, and sorrow very soon gives place to joy : and so it was with these two little ones, for on entering the hall they saw Nero, big black Nero, standing upright on his hind legs, and barking angrily. He came down from this standing position when he saw the children, and jumped up upon them, but only for one minute, and just as though he would greet them ; then again he began to bark, and stand up, and whine. The little girls could not make out what was the matter, and were rather frightened, if the truth is told, when Mr. Howard, hearing Nero barking in the house, came to see what was causing him to do so.

“ Oh, papa,” said Rosie, “ we are so glad you are come, Nero is so odd, he frightens us ; look at him, papa, standing up on his hind legs, and scratching and barking away so.”

Mr. Howard did look, and very soon discovered the cause of Nero's uneasiness,—and what do you think it was ? why, it was this, that a beautiful large white Persian cat, with a magnificent bushy tail, which had been sent as a present to Rosie a few days back by those two boys whose big dog had frightened the pony and made it run away—the boys whom Rosie still now and then called “ the naughty boys,”—this cat

had sprung up to the top of a high cabinet, and though the little girls had not discovered her in her hiding-place, Nero had, and it was this splendid cat which was making him so angry.

Mr. Howard pointed pussy out to the children, and then standing up on a chair he tried to lift her down ; but no, pussy would not come : she went back and back, putting her shoulders up, and waving her tail, and looking very grand and angry, but she had no notion of coming down from her place of safety, whilst that big black dog was barking at her, and watching her from below. But pussy was not the only thing on the top of the cabinet, for there were some valuable old china vases there, too, and Mr. Howard was afraid that pussy in her anger would sweep one of these down with her tail : so he called the butler and told him to get the cat down. The butler had a table-napkin in his hand, and with this napkin he hit poor pussy, who was exceedingly indignant at such treatment, and gave one great leap down on the ground. Then she halted, put her back up to such a height, and with a fierce spit at Nero, dashed across the hall, and bounded out through one of the windows which was open. Nero went full chase after her, but he did not catch her ; for, active, nimble pussy was up a great cedar tree in a minute, and half hidden, and quite safe amongst its green boughs, whilst Nero danced about, and barked, and jumped all in vain.

“ Will Nero always hate Pussy, papa ? ” asked

Kate. "Look at the old fellow—how he is jumping and jumping up!"

"I hope, Katie," said Mr. Howard, "that Nero will in time get used to pussy and she to him; but at present they are sworn enemies."

And now the dinner-bell rung, and the dining-room door was thrown open, and so they were all obliged to give up watching Nero and pussy, and go in to dinner.

But this little scene between the cat and dog had changed the current of thoughts and done the children good, and as Mr. Howard did not like to see them with pale cheeks and tearful eyes, he told them one or two little anecdotes about cats which amused and interested them; he told them how cats cling to life, and that it is a common saying that "a cat has nine lives," because they will live through many things which would kill other animals; he told them that once he had been staying in a house with a gentleman who had a very hasty and bad temper, and who hated cats, and that one day this gentleman had gone up into his own bedroom, a room at the top of a very high large house, and there on his bed lay an unlucky pussy-cat fast asleep. The angry gentleman, without a moment's thought, seized this poor sleeping cat, and hurled it out of the window. Mr. Howard said he was greatly distressed at such a cruel act, and he went down-stairs and out on the lawn to see what had become of poor pussy,

and whether she was quite dead, and to his great amazement he saw the cat get up, stretch itself, and crawl away into the bushes, hardly hurt at all.

"Oh, what a good thing!" cried Kate; "and what a horrid cruel gentleman!"

"Indeed, dear Katie," said her father, "it was a horrid cruel thing to do; but it was done in a moment of anger and passion, and at such moments people scarcely know what they do; and that is why it is so very necessary for old and young, for children and for grown-up people, to learn to conquer, and to subdue, anger and passion; but this cannot be done in a minute, nor without the grace and the help of God's Holy Spirit. I know a little girl who had never been taught this lesson, but had been allowed to do a great deal too much what she liked, and to have her own way; for some years she was an only child, and her parents were very rich, and they had spoiled and petted her sadly. But when she was eight years old, a little baby brother was born. Her father and mother were so rejoiced at the birth of a son, and bonfires were lighted by the tenantry, and the church bells rang out a merry peal; and when the little girl saw the bright sparkling bonfires, and heard the clashing of the rejoicing bells, she asked her nurse what all the fuss was about, and what it all meant, and her nurse said—'Why, Miss, it is because you have got a little brother.'

"Then little Miss turned very scarlet, and burst into a passion of tears, and said—'Oh, I wish he had never been born, and I had much rather hear the bells toll than ring.'"

"Did she say so really, papa? What a naughty little girl!"

"Indeed she did, my Rosie; and a very unhappy child I have no doubt she was, because selfish and passionate children must be unhappy; but I have something else very wonderful to tell you about a cat, if you like to hear it."

"We do want to hear it!" "We do want to hear it!" was the answer papa got.

"Some few years ago, an old acquaintance of mine returned from India—he came home himself by land, but he sent his goods and chattels home by sea, and one of these chattels was a very large chest, packed full of things which he wished to take back to England. It was many many months before this chest was opened; people heard strange noises occasionally, coming forth as it were from this huge heavy chest; some folk were quite frightened at these mysterious noises—these growls, and groans, and screams—and would not be left alone in the room with this chest. At length it was opened by its possessor, and to his amazement a living cat crawled out, wan, emaciated, and more like a skeleton cat than a real one, but still alive; and this cat had been shut up in the chest for all those months, and had been the cause of

those mysterious noises. The cat did not live long after its release from its dark prison ; but was it not wonderful that it should have lived in it for so long a time ? ”

“ It was, indeed, papa—but is this really true ? ”

“ Yes, Katie, it is really true. ”

“ And had the cat nothing to eat ? ” asked Rose.

“ Nothing, love ; but probably it was in a stupefied state the greater part of those months, and it must have had a little air to breathe, somehow—but it was very wonderful that it could have lived, and only confirms the common saying that a cat has nine lives. But once, in this very house, there was a cat, a great favourite in the kitchen, a handsome large tortoise-shell cat, but a terrible poacher. The gamekeeper had spared it once or twice, because it was the housekeeper’s pet ; but one night naughty poaching pussy was caught in a trap, and found in the morning with one leg broken and another very much hurt, and the man who found it, having a sort of spite against the cat, because of all the mischief it had done, gave it a knock on the head, and cut its tail off, and threw it on a heap of dried leaves, thinking that it was dead. A few days after this, the cook saw a lame, lean, disfigured, tailless cat creep quietly into the kitchen, and lay itself down in the very corner that the lost, handsome tortoise-shell used always to repose itself in. She looked at the ungainly creature once, and again, and

again, till she began to feel sure it was the very lost cat, once so handsome, now so ugly. She called the housekeeper, and the housekeeper immediately recognized her old favourite, and instantly set to work to feed the poor maimed and lean animal. In a few weeks the cat picked up its flesh, lost its lameness, and though it never recovered its tail, because tails won't grow a second time, looked somewhat like its old self. And it must needs go poaching again; so off it set one moonlight night, and was trotting across a glade of green grass, and making its way into a wood, where there were many partridges, pheasants, and leverets, when the keeper spied it out, recognized it as the poaching cat, and shot it dead."

"Poor pussy," said Rose. "What a pity it would go poaching again. Will my beautiful pussy-cat ever poach, papa, and will the gamekeeper shoot it if it does?—because I shall be as sorry as it is possible to be, if it is shot. Will you tell the gamekeeper, please dear papa, not to shoot it?"

"I don't think your beautiful white cat is a poacher, my child; it is more tender in its habits, and is always in the house at night. You need not be afraid about her, but still I will speak to the gamekeepers and tell them, if by any chance they see her about at night, that they are not to shoot her. And now, my children, I must be off, and not stay chatting here with you any longer. I must give orders for the carriage to go down to the station,

and meet the train Susan and her friend come by."

"May we go in it, papa?" said both the little girls.

"And, will you come to?"

"You may go in it, dears, if you like. I don't think I shall be able to go with you, because I want to walk over to the Seckars again, and learn how that dear child is doing, and more particulars of her sad accident than I could this morning; and Emma, if it would be any comfort or relief to Mr. and Mrs. Seckar to send the two elder girls and their governess here, I shall beg them to do so, and will you have a room ready in case they should come?"

"Yes, certainly I will," replied Aunt Emma—"and if there is any possible way in which we can help them, I hope they won't hesitate to let us know."

"I think, dear Emma," then said Mr. Howard, "that Mrs. Seckar knows your kind and tender heart quite well enough to feel sure she may ask you to do anything you can for her; the difficulty in these cases is to know how best to show sympathy—it is so little that can be done, and so little, oftentimes, that people are willing to allow one to do, however much one may wish it. But we will do what we can, for their trouble is indeed a great one. Good bye, my darlings, and be sure to be in good time for the train: Susan won't like to be kept waiting."

"Papa, shall you send again for Walter and

Reginald, because we can't wait all that long time for them?"

"Oh, no, Katie, I shan't send the carriage again for two big boys, they must manage for themselves—you should not treat boys as you do girls. No; Walter must find his own way home—and now I must really be off."

As it happened, the children did not go to the station in the carriage to meet sister Sue, for about four o'clock it began to rain—gently and quietly at first, but heavily and determinedly before six o'clock, and so they were obliged to stay at home, and watch the carriage as it went down the avenue in the pouring rain; and whilst they were still watching from the school-room window, their father came in, having been driven home by the rain earlier than he anticipated returning.

He knew his little girls would be very anxious to hear about poor Rosie Seckar, and so he went straight up to the school-room to tell them about her; and he was greeted with the cry from both of them—

"How is Rosie, papa—how is she?"

"She is still in very great danger, dears," he answered. "The doctors give but little hope of her recovery; and she is terribly hurt—one of her legs is broken, and one of her arms sadly injured, and they fear for her head. But in spite of all this I cannot but think and hope she may be spared, though one

must not be sanguine. I saw her poor father, who is most deeply distressed, and he told me that the way the accident happened was this : Rose was running on before her sisters and governess, and a man let a ladder drop just as she passed—it was one of those very tall ladders which reach to the top of high houses, and the man was trying to move this ladder, and could not do it because of its weight, and so, somehow or other, he managed to let it go, and it fell just as the little dancing child passed underneath, unconscious of any danger, and skipping along on her way in the gleefulness of her heart.”

“Poor dear Rosie, I am so sorry for her,” said little Rose Howard, bursting into tears.

“And so am I,” said Katie, crying also.

“And so am I too,” said Mr. Howard : “but, darlings, perhaps she may recover, and we must hope that she will ; and now, don’t you want to know whether her sisters, Florence and Edith, are coming here, or not ?”

“Yes, we do ! we do ! Are they coming ?” said Katie, drying her eyes, and eager to know. “The room is all ready for them, papa, and we have not had tea, because Aunt Emma said we might wait and see if they did come.”

Just at this moment both Aunt Emma and Nurse came into the room, having heard that Mr. Howard had returned home, and was with the children in the school-room, with the same questions on their lips,

"How is she?" and "are the other two girls coming here?"

When Mr. Howard had told them about the poor little sufferer, he went on to say that the other two sisters did not wish to come, for they were both so very anxious about Rose that they could not bear to be out of the house.

"Then my young ladies must have their tea at once," said Nurse, and she went downstairs to order it; and seeing that they were both sad and out of spirits, the good loving old Nursie made them some nice hot toast and butter, and begged for some marmalade from the housekeeper, and took these treasures upstairs herself, and made the little ones have a good tea, and stayed chatting with them till all the tears were gone, and the smiling faces come back; then she bade them come with her into the nursery, and she dressed them both in clean white muslin dresses, and wide pink sashes, and tied their hair up with some pink ribbon to match, and sent them down into the drawing-room, there to sit with Aunt Emma, and wait for sister Susan and Grace Richmond's arrival. They had not long to wait, for very soon they saw the carriage coming through the trees. Nearer and nearer it came every moment.

"Here they are, Auntie! here they are! may we go down into the hall to meet them?"

"Yes, you may, loves," said Aunt Emma; "but you must not go out into the rain."

"No, we won't," said the children, and down they ran.

Oh, there was such a greeting, and kissing, and hugging, between Susan and her little sisters ; and then an introduction to Miss Grace Richmond, who looked so kind and gentle that little Rosie took her hand at once, and asked her if she would like to come into the drawing-room and see Aunt Emma. Grace Richmond said that she would, and so they two went off together, and Susan and Kate followed hand in hand. Aunt Emma met them halfway, and gave them both an affectionate welcome ; and they all went into the drawing-room together. In the course of five minutes Susan had heard all the home news ; one thing after another was poured into her ear. She had heard about Rose Seckar's accident ; she had heard about Elsie Lane, and how she had been nearly drowned, and was now living in the Hall as the house-keeper's little girl ; she had heard about Mrs. Long and her child Alice, and how Alice was to come back with Mrs. Long after the Easter holidays ; and she was just going to hear about the white pussy, when in came Mr. Howard, and interrupted the flow of talk.

"Welcome home, my Susan," said her father. "How you are grown ; I hardly recognize myself as the father of such a grown-up young lady ; and a kindly welcome to Miss Grace Richmond, too," he added, as he went up to her, and shook hands cor-

dially. "And now I must send you both away to get ready for dinner, as I know it will be on the table in a few minutes."

So away they went, escorted by Rose and Kate, who, however, returned almost immediately, having been quickly dismissed by the young ladies, who could not get on well in their dressing and unpacking with the little chatterers in the room.

"I like Miss Grace Richmond," said Rosie, when she returned to the drawing-room, and seated herself on a stool at her father's side, "and I shall choose her for my grown-up friend ; she does not look half as old as Sue does ; though she is taller, she has not got such old eyes."

"Old eyes, dear Rosie, what do you mean by that ?" asked her father, very much amused at his little girl's words.

"Oh, papa, don't you know what I mean ? Her eyes laugh more than Susan's do, and so does her mouth ; and old people's eyes don't often laugh, do they, papa ? and Susan's don't, though she is not old."

"Well, Rosie," said Mr. Howard, "I only saw Miss Grace Richmond for one minute, and so I can't give any opinion about her eyes, but I can about my little questioner's eyes, for they look very sleepy, and I think the sooner they are shut up tight for the night the better, for it is nearly eight o'clock, and there goes the gong for dinner. So good night to both of you, and trot away to Nurse ; and as you go you may ask

the butler for a few of those fresh strawberries which came in from the greenhouse to-day."

So they kissed papa and Aunt Emma, and ran away upstairs to Nurse. And to Nurse Rosie said just the same as she had said to her papa, that Grace Richmond was the very nicest girl she had ever seen, and that she intended to ask her to be her grown-up friend. But Nurse soon put an end to all chatter, and quickly got the tired little ones into bed.

CHAPTER IV.

WHILST Rose and Kate were at breakfast the morning of the next day, with Nurse in the nursery, who should come in but Walter and Reginald Owen. Up both the little ones jumped, and greeted Walter with their usual shower of kisses, hugging him round the neck, and calling him "their dear darling boy! their own precious brother!" Walter did not quite like this very overflowing demonstration of affection, and tried to bring it to an end.

"That will do, girls; that will do; I am sure you have given me kisses enough; let me go."

He was both fond and proud of his little sisters; but still he had much rather that they would not be quite so loving to him as they always were on his first return home, and especially so before Reginald, a bigger boy than he was, and a stranger to his sisters and to Nurse. After a few minutes, he succeeded in breaking loose from the kisses and hugs.

"And now," said he, "let me introduce you both to your new cousin. Mr. Reginald Owen; Miss Rose, and Miss Kate Howard."

"I shan't be content without a cousin's kiss," said

Reginald, stooping down and kissing both the little girls, without asking their leave ; and then the two boys sat down to the table and petitioned old Nursie to give them each a cup of her very best tea ; and old Nursie, who was a good kind creature, and very fond of Master Walter, popped a little more tea into the teapot, and boiled up the kettle, and in a minute or two did give an uncommonly good cup of tea to each of the boys. Very very soon Reginald and the children were quite at home with each other, and they were chatting away to him and to Walter, and telling them all their budget of news, just as they had done the evening before to Susan and Grace Richmond.

“Have you seen my beautiful white Persian cat, Walter ?” then asked Rose.

“No, not yet, Rosie ; who gave it you ?”

“Those naughty boys sent it me about a fortnight ago.”

“Those what ?” said Reginald. “Did you say those naughty boys, cousin Rosie ?”

“Oh !” answered Walter, “you are not yet used to my sisters’ phraseology. There are two boys in this neighbourhood, by name Seymour, and in the winter they caused our pony to be frightened, and to run away ; and ever since then Rosie has called them ‘the naughty boys,’ though they have been giving her presents incessantly, because she was one of those who were hurt when the pony-carriage upset.”

“Well, really,” replied Reginald, “I think they

deserve the name Rosie has given them, if they caused all that mischief ; but you shall tell me about it by yourself another time, little cousin," he added.

"Yes, so I will, Reginald. I will tell you how it happened, and how very much frightened and hurt we were ; but I have quite forgiven those boys, and I don't now think them naughty boys, though sometimes I can't help calling them so ; but I was not half so much hurt as poor little darling Rose Seckar is."

"Yes," said Reginald, "last night Mr. Howard was telling us about her accident, and we are going to ride over after breakfast and inquire how she is this morning, and what kind of a night she has had."

And here this talk in the nursery was brought to an end by the ringing of the prayer-bell, and down they went to the Hall, meeting Susan and Grace Richmond on their way. Susan was getting decidedly to look like a grown-up young lady, with her crinoline and her long gowns, and her hair in a large loop at the back of her head, and a cold demure manner, so unlike that of her friend Grace, who, though older by some ten months or so, did not look half so much the young lady, but more simple, and with far more glee of eye and heart, and manner, as Rosie, with her quick child instincts, had discovered.

The day promised to be a thoroughly wet one, a promise which none of the young ones approved of ; but, as the old proverb saith, "What can't be cured, must be endured," they consoled themselves to the best of

their power. They played battledore and shuttlecock in the hall after breakfast for a long time, and Grace Richmond and Walter were capital players ; they kept it up without one break nine hundred and ninety-nine times ; but then, unluckily, the footman opened the door, and Nero came dashing in and jumped up upon Walter, and made him drop his arm just as he was going to shout out triumphantly "one thousand."

They were both very much disappointed, but they bore it well, and they made a bargain that they would try again another day, and lock the door, so that neither footman nor Nero could come in and disturb them.

The rain did not cease ; but in spite of it, soon as luncheon was over, Mr. Howard and the boys started to walk to the Seckars, and Reginald took charge of a small basket of fresh fragrant strawberries for poor Rosie Seckar, which was sent by kind Aunt Emma.

The girls sang and talked, and got rather weary of each other, which Aunt Emma perceiving, she invited them up into her room. She had been busy all the morning illuminating a text for the chancel of the church ; it was beautifully done, and had a wreath round it of emblematic flowers. She was pointing these out to the two elder girls, and explaining the meaning of some of the emblems, when Rosie asked—

"Dear Aunt Emma, please to tell us what you are talking about ; I don't understand you, and I want to

know about the flowers as much as Susan and Grace do."

"My child," then said Aunt Emma, "you must wait till you are older before you can understand what I was talking to Susan and Grace about, but I think I can tell you, and read to you all, some things concerning flowers which will interest you. Look, dears, at that trembling aspen-tree, just opposite the window, in the park. Do you see the one I mean?"

"Oh, yes, aunty dear, that tree which shakes so and shivers. Do you see it, Grace?"

"Yes, Rosie, I see it. I have often stood and watched one we have at home, and wondered why it should so shake."

"Listen to this tradition about it," then said Aunt Emma. "I found it in a book the other day."

Aunt Emma reads—"There is an old tradition that the cross was made from the wood of the aspen-tree: hence the peculiar quivering of its leaves, ever trembling in remembrance of the sacred blood which flowed down the tree whereon our Lord was crucified at 'the place which is called Calvary.'"

"I shall always think of that when I see the aspen quivering," said Grace; "I like the idea. But I have also heard that the *lignum vitæ* was the tree from which the wood for the cross was taken."

"Yes, Grace, that is said too; but there are many traditions about that wood—all of which are interesting. Here is another, about a flower, taken from the

same book—which is, ‘that the purple orchis grew at the foot of the cross, and that it has ever since borne on its leaves the spots of blood which fell on its petals at the Crucifixion.’ The country people about Cheshire call this flower ‘Gethsemane.’ There are so many legends and traditions connected with the cross, that no one book contains them all. This is a pretty one, about a bird, not a flower—even about the little robin: ‘It was on the day when the Lord Jesus Christ felt his pain upon the bitter cross of wood, that a small and tender bird, which had hovered awhile around, drew nigh about the seventh hour, and nestled upon the wreath of Syrian thorns. And when the gentle creature of the air beheld those cruel spikes, the thirty and three which pierced that bleeding brow, she was moved with grief and compassion, and the piety of birds; and she sought to turn aside if but one of those thorns with her fluttering wings and lifted feet! It was in vain! She did but rend her own soft breast, until blood flowed over her feathers from the wound! Then said a voice from among the angels, ‘Thou hast done well, sweet daughter of the boughs! Yes, and I bring thee tidings of reward. Henceforth, from this very hour, and because of this deed of thine, it shall be that in many a land thy race and kind shall bear upon their bosoms the hue and banner of thy faithful blood; and the children of every house shall yearn with a natural love towards the birds of the ruddy breast,

and shall greet their presence with a voice of thanksgiving!"

"I like that exceedingly," said Grace Richmond; "it is very touching, and quite new to me."

"And so do I," chimed in Rosie; "I always was very fond of the dear little robin redbreasts, and now I shall like them better than ever, since I know why their breasts are red."

"I am so glad that interested you, dear Rosie," then said Aunt Emma; "and as you grow older, and read more, you will find a great many things of this kind in books. I have one more tradition to tell you connected with the cross, whilst we are talking about it; which is, that the wood of that cross on which the Saviour of the world hung, was the wood from that very tree of life which grew in Paradise. And now I think we have had as much as your little minds will take in to-day of these sacred traditions; another time I will tell you some more. Katie, come and smell this delicious moss-rose which the gardener sent me up this afternoon; it is out of the greenhouse—not out of the garden, because roses don't flower till July in the open air: but it is as sweet as a rose can be."

"It is indeed, aunty dear," said Katie. "Come and smell it, Grace; and you too, Susan and Rosie."

And they all came, and pronounced the rose to be a most sweet and delicious one. Then Aunt Emma asked them if they would like to know how moss came to grow upon a rose, and they said they would very much

indeed; so Aunt Emma told them this: "That one hot summer day the spirit of the flowers was weary and tired, and laid herself down to rest and to sleep beneath a rose-tree. There she slept quietly and sweetly, and when she woke she was greatly refreshed; and she felt so grateful to the pretty rose-tree for its shade and its fragrance, that she spoke to it, and said that it might ask any favour it liked, and she would grant it. And in a minute the rose-tree, blushing deeply, said, 'Make me still more beautiful than I am.' The spirit paused and thought within herself how that could be done; for was not the rose-tree already brilliantly beautiful, with its green leaves and its ruby flowers? For a few moments the spirit stayed, wrapped in contemplation; then with her wand she touched the tree, and lo! each of its tiny buds, each of its full-blown flowers, was wreathed round with an exquisite veil of soft green moss. Yes, lovely as the rose-tree had been before, it was more lovely now. And the spirit went on her way enchanted with her work."

"Oh! aunty, that is indeed pretty. What a clever spirit to think of moss! I am sure I should have been dreadfully puzzled."

"Katie; you are not a spirit," said Rose. "Of course, spirits are never puzzled; they can do anything they like, and float about, and come and go, and are not like us."

"Well, Rosie, perhaps you would like to hear this

little bit out of a book I was reading to-day," said Aunt Emma, "as spirits seem to interest you."

Aunt Emma reads : "And why does the foxglove bend and sway itself so gracefully ? Is it that it is blown by the wind ? Oh, no ! It is that this flower is sacred to the fairies, and that it has the power of recognizing them, and all spiritual beings who pass by ; and that it bows in deference to them as they waft along."

"Oh ! aunty dear, what wonderful things there are in books ! When I am grown up, I shall read all day, and then I shall have as many interesting things to tell little children as you have, aunty. Do you read all day, Grace darling ?"

"No, indeed, Rosie, I don't, because I have a great many other things to do, and I should be so tired of reading all day, and so would you ; and I don't think you will do so when you are grown up. Do you, Susan ?"

"Oh no, of course she won't ; but children are such silly little creatures, they always think things so different to what they really are. I dare say Rose won't care a bit for books when she grows up to be a young lady, for I hardly know any that do."

"Am I such a very silly child, dear aunty ?" said Rose, with a deep colour in her cheeks, "and shan't I care about books when I grow up ?"

"My darling, I never could think either you or little Katie silly children, and I hope very much that

you will care for books—you will be much happier if you do than if you don't—it is a very great loss to any not to care for reading—but I have but very little doubt that you will care for books and for reading all your life. I think sister Sue made a mistake when she said that children were silly little creatures ; but we must forgive her for making it, and not put ourselves out about it. And now do you think that you two could sing one of your pretty songs to her and to Grace whilst aunty finishes this letter ?”

“Oh yes, that we will,” exclaimed both the children.

But at this moment the door opened, and Mr. Howard came in, and everything was forgotten in the eagerness to know how poor dear little Rose Seckar was. They were very glad, indeed, to hear Mr. Howard tell them that Dr. Birch, and the other doctor who was attending her, both thought more favourably of her case than they had done the day before, though she was still in a most precarious state, and would probably continue so for some days. Dr. Birch had said that he had never had so uncomplaining, obedient, and good a little patient in his life.

“And now,” said Mr. Howard, when he had answered innumerable questions respecting Rose Seckar and her sisters, “which of my children will give me a cup of warm tea, for I am cold and shivering with being out so long in the rain ?”

"Oh, I will, papa," said Katie.

"And I will," said Rose.

And so, too, said Susan.

"Then suppose we all adjourn into the school-room, for I know tea is ready there," was Mr. Howard's reply to his children.

When they were seated round the tea-table, papa asked his girls, little and big, what they had been doing that wet afternoon, and they told him, and how Aunt Emma had been reading strange things to them.

"Not stories, papa," said Rosie. "They were not what I call stories which aunty has been reading to us, because stories are things which tell you about either good or naughty children ; but these were about trees and flowers, and were excessively grave."

"Not all of them, Rosie dear," murmured Grace—"the fairy one was not grave at all."

"No, not that one. Do you know, papa, that it was a fairy which made moss-roses ?"

"Was it, indeed, dear ? Ah, well, fairies do wonderful things. Should you not like to see one, Rosie ?"

"Yes, very much, papa ; but I never shall, because no one has ever seen fairies, Nurse says ; and she says, too, that there are none to be seen."

"And do you know, Rosie," papa answered, "that perhaps Nurse is quite right ? and Aunt Emma, though she tells you these beautiful stories, never

expects to see a fairy, and never thinks you will see one either. And now, supposing you were to ask me to tell you a story—because I could tell one, if all the ladies, little and big, wish me to tell it.”

“We do! we do! we do!” came from every mouth all round the table.

And Mr. Howard began—

“Once upon a time, perhaps thirty years ago, four gentlemen were travelling in a coach. They were going through North Wales, and they had been shut up in the coach for some hours, and were all of them very tired of it, when one proposed to the others that in order to wear away the weary time, they should each tell a story. They all four consented; and the first began and told his story; and wonderful, I have no doubt, it was, though I can’t say anything about it, because I never heard what it was. Then the second told his story, perhaps more wonderful still; but about this, too, I can say nothing, because I have not the slightest idea what it was. Then came the third—dreadful and horrible, perhaps—and perhaps quite the contrary; but, as I don’t know, I can’t say which. Then, at last, the fourth gentleman was told that his turn was come.

“‘My turn!’ said he. ‘You must please to excuse me, for I have no story to tell.’

“‘We can’t excuse you,’ replied the other three. ‘We have each of us told our story, according to our bargain, and now we expect one from you.’

“‘But,’ again said the fourth gentleman, ‘indeed I have none to tell. You must really let me off.’

“‘No, no! we won’t, we won’t!’ was the answer he received from his three companions.

“‘Then,’ said he, ‘if I must, I must. I could tell you one story, but to me it will be a most painful task to do so; and I know no other. I ask, once again, will you not let me off? Need I tell it? It will distress me sadly.’

“‘We must have it,’ said the others, determinately, and evidently most anxious to know what this painful story could be.

“‘Then,’ said he again, ‘if I must, I must.’

“And he began—

“‘The story I am about to tell relates to myself. It happened to me some few months back, and is associated in my mind with the most terrible recollections. I was taking the very same journey that we are taking now. Well! it was in the depth of winter, and I was forced to spend a night at an inn which we shall pass by-and-by. In the night I had a dream, a very uncomfortable one, for it was that a murder had been committed in that inn, and that the body of the murdered man had been thrown down a well in the yard—which well I saw distinctly in my dream. Then a voice spoke to me, and said, ‘Charge the landlord of this inn with the murder.’ The fright of the voice and the horror of the dream awoke me. Once again I slept, and once again I dreamt the same dream. I

heard the same voice say again the same words, 'Charge the landlord with the murder ;' and once again I started up in an agony of distress. It was now morning, and I rose, for to sleep more was impossible. Whilst I was dressing, some noise outside the house made me go to the window, and there, before my eyes, was the very well which I had seen in my dream. Oh, how I shivered from head to foot ! After I was dressed, I sauntered down carelessly, and as though I had no particular object for doing so, into the yard, where the haunting well was. I stood by it, and with my foot I heedlessly kicked its cover off. In so doing I displaced a brick or two, and, stooping down to see if I could replace them, my eye fell upon the handle of a broken knife, the very knife I had seen in my dream. Again a cold shiver ran through me from head to foot. This led to an investigation. And, to cut matters short, I had to charge the landlord with the murder. One circumstance came out, and then another. The murder was brought home to the landlord ; and—he was hung. We are not far now from the place where all this happened ; and you may imagine how deeply painful the occurrence has been to me—so painful that, for reasons I can scarcely explain to you, I must implore you, each and all, never to allude to what I have been obliged, as it were, to tell you—never to repeat it—to keep all this a deep secret. My reasons for this request are most urgent. I can hardly bear to think over that time myself ; but my chief

reason, and the one which I feel you will all acknowledge ought to be considered—and which ought to influence you to be entirely silent about this painful tragedy—is—that there is not a word of truth in the whole matter.’

“And so my story ends,” said Mr. Howard.

“Oh, papa, papa! what a pity that it was all false!”

“Well done, Miss Katie,” said Walter, who had come in with Reginald just as his father began the story, and so had heard it, “so you are quite sorry that the murder had not been committed?”

“No, Walter, I am not sorry about that, but I never thought that papa was telling us all the time what had never happened; and he looked so grave.”

“I don’t think, dear Katie,” said Aunt Emma, “that any one of us expected papa’s story to end as it did—not even Walter. I am sure I did not.”

“Nor did I,” said Grace; “I felt so astonished; but, Mr. Howard, how well you kept your secret, for you took us all in.”

“Did I, Grace? I meant to do so, I must confess; but now as I have told you a false story, about a false dream, would you like to hear one about a true dream, before you go to dress for dinner?”

“Yes, very much indeed,” was the universal answer to this question.”

And Mr. Howard began—

“This dream, I am going to tell you about, is a true one. I have often heard one of the friends of the

very good man who had the dream tell it as it had been told him by the good man himself. And the dream was this—that he was benighted in a dark forest in Germany ; he could not see his way, and there was no moon or no star to guide him. He was very much perplexed ; and this perplexity was increased, and fear added to it, by hearing himself followed by some men on horseback—men who he knew in his dream were robbers. He hurried on, and hurried on, as swiftly as he could, and nearer and nearer to him came the robbers ; at length, he reached a place where four roads met. A voice said to him, “Turn to the right, and you will be safe”—he did as the voice bade him ; he turned to the right ; the robbers, who could not see which turn he had taken, went to the left, and so the good man escaped from them and was saved.”

“Oh, how glad I am the voice spoke to him ; but did it, indeed, speak, papa ?”

“Wait a bit, Katie love, you shall hear. I have not come to the end of my story.”

“Go on, papa ; go on, please.”

“And, Katie, don’t interrupt again,” was Walter’s rejoinder.

Mr. Howard went on thus :—

“Some few weeks after this dream, which made a great impression on the good man’s mind, he was obliged to take a journey into a distant and strange part of the country to him. It was in Germany,

which was his native land ; there he was benighted in a forest, but coming to a small wayside inn, which had been built in this forest for the shelter of travellers, he took refuge in it. He had not been long there before some tall, rough-looking men entered. He fancied that they were watching him, and making signs to each other about him, and not liking this, and having learned which way he must go to reach his destination, he rose, paid his little account, and left the inn. When he first got out into the open air again from the inn, the moon was shining, and he could see his way, but soon heavy clouds eclipsed that moon, and blotted out its light, and the rain began to fall in torrents. On and on he went, when his ear caught the sound of some horses' feet following him. He knew instinctively it was those men who were after him. His dream recurred to his mind. He pressed on and on. Once again the moon broke out from beneath the massive clouds, and showed him his way. Before him lay four cross roads. He heard no voice, but he remembered the voice which had spoken to him in his dream, and he turned to the right and escaped, and thus baffled his pursuers, and was saved."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, papa ; we have been interested."

"Much, very much interested," said Grace. "What a remarkable dream it was !"

"It was, indeed," said Aunt Emma, "so evidently

one sent for a purpose—sent by Him to whom the night is as clear as the day—by Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps.”

“But, Aunt Emma,” asked Walter, “do you really believe in dreams?”

“Tell me this, Walter,” said Aunt Emma, in reply. “If a very good man, whose word was undoubtedly to be believed, had told you that he had had such a dream, and had been able clearly to recognize within himself shortly afterwards why that dream had been sent, should you believe him or not?”

“Oh, I should believe him; I could not help it.”

“No, dear. You neither could nor ought you to dare to disbelieve him. And if such a dream has once been sent, why may not dreams often have been sent, as I believe they have been; and not only dreams, but impressions and presentiments, or foreshadowings; communications, in short, made by God direct upon the mind of man, for some purpose or other, and in a way which has nothing to do with the ordinary way men acquire knowledge. We all know well, little Katie and children younger than her, how many and many a time God revealed his will in a dream to the grand old Jewish heroes, and kings, and prophets; but we have not time to discuss this matter any further to-day. It is a very interesting subject.”

“Aunt Emma is right that we must cease this discussion just now, though I am sorry that it should be so, for I like to hear dear Aunt Emma grow warm and

eloquent upon a topic which I know is one to her full of life and interest ; though rather puzzling, and too deep, and beyond the ken of these little maidens. Are you quite tired of hearing us talk, Rosie ? ”

“ No, dear papa, I am not ; though I don’t understand what Aunt Emma and Walter were talking about. But, then, little children can’t always understand grown-up people’s words, nor be amused by grown-up people’s books ; and that is why they care so much more for children, is it not, papa ? ”

“ Yes, love, it is,” said her papa. “ And, now, should you and Katie like to go up to Nurse and get dressed, and come down to the dining-room whilst we are at dinner ; or had you rather have a good play with pussy and Elsie in the hall, and come in to dessert ? ”

“ Oh, let us have a good game of play,” said Katie ; “ that will be much more fun than sitting still while you are at dinner.”

“ Do just as you like, my darlings,” said their papa ; “ and when you come into dessert you may bring pussy in with you, and we will give him a walnut to roll about.”

And so they all separated, and the conclave was broken up.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning, whilst breakfast was being brought up, Mr. Howard and Aunt Emma were standing at the open window, breathing the soft fresh air, which was peculiarly delicious after the rain of the previous day. They were talking, and planning together a pic-nic for all the young ones and their friends during these Easter holidays, when suddenly a sound of a galloping horse broke upon their ear. It was coming up the avenue. Evidently the rider was in great haste, and had something of importance to tell.

"I wonder," said Mr. Howard, "what it can be which makes that man ride at such a furious rate. I have not the slightest idea who he is ; but he is going in at the back gate, so if he has any message we shall know in a minute or two what it is."

These words were scarcely out of his mouth before the two boys, Walter and Reginald, rushed into the library, saying—

"The Deanery is on fire ! and Mrs. Campbell dying, and everything burning !"

"What ! what !" cried Mr. Howard. "Where is the man who brought the news ?"

"In the kitchen," said Reginald. "Come and hear."

Away went Mr. Howard and Aunt Emma, followed by Susan, Grace, Edith, Kate, nurse, footman, and, in short, every one in the house.

"What has happened?" asked Mr. Howard of the man.

"Oh, sir, the Deanery is all on fire, blazing up to the sky when I came away to tell you, by Dr. Birch's desire, and to ask you to come as quick as you could."

"Put the horse in the brougham at once," said Mr. Howard to the coachman, who was standing listening, with his mouth open and his hands up. Be round in five minutes. Don't wait to clean anything. Aunt Emma, dear, will you get ready? You must come with me."

"May we go, papa? may we go?" asked all the girls.

"No one must go but Aunt Emma," said Mr. Howard, very decisively, "and the boys, who may be able to help; but what about Mrs. Campbell? Is she hurt? and are the children safe?"

"Every thing and every body was in such a moither and trouble when I came away, sir, that I hardly know; but I heard them say as how Mrs. Campbell was a dying, and how the two young ladies had been nearly burnt to death."

"Oh, my darling Lucy and Edith! oh, my darling

Lucy and Edith! Have they been burnt to death? Oh, what shall we do?"

And then, to make this scene of confusion still greater, both Rose and Kate began to cry bitterly.

"Take them away, nurse, and quiet them. I have no time to attend to them. Grace, like a good, kind girl, go you with them, and tell them that reports always exaggerate matters, and that probably Lucy and Edith are not hurt. And you, Susan, get a cup of tea for Aunt Emma, and an egg, and make her take it before she starts. She is not strong enough to go to such a scene without food."

In a few minutes all was ready; the brougham came to the door, and into it got Mr. Howard, Aunt Emma, and the two boys. The whole household was in a great state of excitement, and no wonder, for the news was very terrible. Hours passed on, and no one came back. The clock struck twelve.

"Oh how I wish papa, or Aunt Emma, or some one would come and tell us what is going on," said Susan.

"So do I," answered Grace; "and so do these two little ones, very much, I know; but we must wait patiently. Suppose we were to put our hats on, and go down the avenue: we might, perhaps, hear something from people who pass by; and we should certainly hear the carriage as it comes home."

"Yes, yes; we will go," said the three sisters; "and immediately, too."

And away they ran to put their hats on, right glad of anything to do, and of any break to the long waiting.

"I shall never be happy again, Grace," said little Katie, "if my two darling friends are burnt. I can't live without Lucy and Edith."

"Katie," replied Grace, "I hope we shall soon hear that your little friends are safe and unhurt; but, dear child, it is not right to speak in that impetuous way. No little child, and no grown-up person, must ever say that they can't bear what God sends them to bear. But don't distress yourself, and make up your mind that they are hurt, till we know the truth, which we don't at present. But hark! can't you hear wheels? I can."

"Oh yes, so do I," said Rosie; "and I can see a carriage coming, and it is on the Deanery road; but I can't see yet whether it is ours. Now I can—it is, it is! Oh, I am so glad. May we run on and meet it?"

"Yes," answered Susan, "you may; but we will all run and meet it together."

And so on they went as fast as they could, and in a minute or two they were by the side of the carriage. The coachman stopped when he saw his young ladies, and Mr. Birch, Dr. Birch's son, who was on the box, got off, and took each child by her hand, and led them on the road, beckoning to Grace and Susan to follow.

This frightened them all. Then Mr. Birch went back to the carriage, and said—

“Go on home quietly, coachman. I will follow with the young ladies.”

Susan and Grace, and Rose and Kate, soon perceived that something had happened; and the little ones' tears and sobs began to come quickly; and the two girls turned very pale.

“Why may we not go to the carriage? Who is in? Do tell us,” said Rosie.

“Come, let me wipe those shining tears away first,” said Mr. Birch; “and if I tell you what has happened, and who is in the carriage, will you be good children, and not cry, and distress us all, but be ready to help and do what you can for those who are in trouble?”

“Oh, we will, we will!” said both the little girls; “but do tell us.”

“You heard that Mrs. Campbell had been hurt, didn't you?”

“We heard she had been killed, Mr. Birch,” answered Grace; “but we did not believe it.”

“Is she dead, and in the carriage?” asked Katie, terrified beyond measure.

“No, dear child,” then said Mr. Birch, feeling he must tell them; “she is in the carriage, and is a good deal hurt; but not dead.”

“And Lucy and Edith?” asked the sobbing child; “are they dead?”

“Lucy is quite well, and will come to see you by

and by. Poor little Edith is not quite well ; and she is in the carriage with her mother and nurse, and must be kept quiet ; and that is why I did not let you go up to the carriage door. I didn't want her to see you ; but in a day or two I hope she will be able to see you. And now I have a message to give you from papa—which is, that he wants to know if you will give up your own room to Edith and Agnes Campbell, and your own little beds, and will let nurse take care of these two little girls instead of you, for these next few days.”

“Oh, yes, that we will !” said the children. “We can dress ourselves, and we can sleep in Aunt Emma’s room. I know she will have us.”

“But, Rosie,” went on Mr. Birch, “Aunt Emma is going to give up her room to Mrs. Campbell, and Mr. Howard told me to tell you to ask your sister, Miss Susan, to take care of you, and Katie was to ask Miss Grace Richmond to be so kind as to take care of her. And now, dear children, as I have given your papa’s messages, and told you what has happened, I must go away, and run as fast as I can to catch the carriage. May I speak a word to you, Miss Susan, before I go ?”

And taking Susan aside, he said : “Mr. Howard begged me to say, that he did not wish the children to see Mrs. Campbell carried out of the carriage, nor Miss Edith—as he knew they would be dreadfully frightened. So will you be good enough to keep

them away from the house for the next half-hour?"

"But Mr. Birch," asked Susan; "what has happened to Mrs. Campbell? Is she very ill?"

"She had a bad fall, which coming on the terror caused by the fire, and by the children's danger, has brought on insensibility. We all thought that if we could bring her up here in the carriage, the quiet would be greatly in her favour. Little Miss Edith was nearly suffocated. She is coming round, and will do well; but she too must be kept very quiet. Little Agnes has one arm badly burnt. Your Aunt Emma is taking care of her, and will bring her up here almost immediately. The Deanery is literally burnt down. I must go now; they won't know what to do without me at the house."

Grace was very anxious to hear what Mr. Birch had been saying to Susan; but it was not easy to tell her without telling the children, which they did not wish to do; but she managed it somehow or other, and then the two girls took the young ones a long walk, and kept them out till their dinner time, which was two o'clock. When they reached home again, they found Aunt Emma waiting for them in the hall, and nurse too, who took the two little ones into the housekeeper's room, and got them ready for dinner down there instead of upstairs in her nursery, as she generally did.

"My darlings," said nurse, "I shan't forget you,

though I am going to take care of Miss Edith and Agnes Campbell ; and have them to sleep in your little beds, by my side, instead of you two, for a few days. And, indeed, they are both there now, and fast asleep ; because the poor dear little things are both hurt, and have had a terrible fright. But run away now to dinner, for it is ready, and the bell won't be rung to-day, for fear of awaking Mrs. Campbell and the children ; and your Aunt Emma will tell you how it all happened."

So away they scampered, but quietly and softly, and very eager to hear from Aunt Emma what she had to tell them. Poor Aunt Emma looked so pale and tired, and as though she was scarcely equal to answer all the questions that were put to her in rapid succession, first by one and then by another.

"Let me have some food, dears, and a glass of wine, before I answer any more questions, and then I will tell you as far as I can all that you want to know, for I am sure you must be anxious to hear ; but you must have patience for a few minutes longer, for I am too exhausted to talk much."

"Oh, yes, dear Aunt Emma ; we will be patient," said Rosie, "and not ask you any questions till you have had a great deal of luncheon."

But Aunt Emma could not eat this great deal of luncheon. She was over tired, and quite knocked up, and unequal to any talking. She was very much relieved when young Mr. Birch, who had been upstairs

with Mrs. Campbell, came down to have some luncheon, which he greatly wanted, and seeing how exhausted Aunt Emma looked and was, he made her lie down on the sofa, and gave her two glasses of port wine and some jelly, and then he told the young ladies and the children that he would answer all their questions, or, what would be still better, tell them how all had happened, without their asking him any questions ; and so as soon as he had had some luncheon, he told them how he and his father were just going to sit down to an eight o'clock breakfast, when a messenger arrived from the Dean, to say the Deanery was on fire, and Mrs. Campbell badly hurt, and to ask Dr. Birch to come as quickly as he could. So he and his father started off that very moment, and got to the Deanery in less than ten minutes after they had received the message. And such a scene of confusion, terror, and distress neither of them ever remembered to have seen before : the blazing house—the air dense with smoke and full of burning particles—the crush of people—the little children in their white night-gowns and bare feet—poor Mrs. Campbell lying insensible on a shawl on the ground, and Edith by her side—Mr. Campbell distracted between his wish to save what he could from the devouring fire (which was leaping up from room to room and consuming everything in its fiery glowing march), and his insensible wife and hardly rescued children.

The fire had been perceived by the cook when she

went downstairs at seven o'clock. On opening the kitchen door she saw that the kitchen was full of smoke, but she did not take alarm, as she ought to have done at once, but went and foolishly opened the window, thinking thereby to get rid of the smoke; and then she proceeded to make up the fire and put the water for breakfast on to boil, without knowing what mischief she had done by opening the window; for in rushed the fresh air and fanned the smouldering fire into active flames, and a beam of the kitchen ceiling in a few minutes was in a bright blaze. Then, indeed, she was frightened, and ran screaming upstairs, "The kitchen is on fire! The kitchen is on fire!" This cry awoke Mrs. Campbell and the Dean. They jumped out of bed, scrambled some clothes on, and the Dean went downstairs to see whether the alarm was a groundless one or no; and Mrs. Campbell went to her nursery, but as she went, each moment denser and denser became the smoke, and more stupifying the air. She opened the nursery door, and found them all still asleep and in bed; with difficulty she roused the nurse and got her up, and made her take one little one in her arms, whilst she herself took another and ran downstairs. The staircase was getting to be of a fiery heat; and the banisters could not be touched; and Agnes and Edith were still upstairs, and in a room which could only be reached by the burning staircase.

"Oh, Mr. Birch," cried little Katie, "what did they

do? how were they saved? and is that why they are hurt?"

"Yes, it is, Miss Katie; but they were saved, and for that we must all be very thankful, for they were in great danger."

Miss Lucy, who had slept since her accident on the ground floor, was easily aroused and got out of the house, but the two little girls upstairs were not so easily got at. Mrs. Campbell was the first to remember them. She screamed out to Nurse, "Take this child, Nurse, and I will go and fetch the little girls;" but when she attempted to go she couldn't; the stairs were blazing, the smoke and fume confused her brain, and staggered her, and down she fell—the stairs gave way under her, so that her fall was a serious one, and had not the Dean seen her fall, and been able to come to her rescue in a moment, she would have been killed; but he came, got her up in his arms, and laid her down on the ground, and flew to see about Edith and Agnes.

"Where are they, Nurse?" he shouted out.

"In their own room, sir."

He waited not an instant, but darted off and called young Seymour, who had just arrived, to come and help him. Fortunately, or rather in this case I ought to say providentially, the window was a large one, and not of any great height from the ground, and young Seymour got a ladder and placed it at the window, for it was useless to attempt getting to them by the staircase. The Dean mounted the ladder, shook

the window, and called to the children to open it ; but they were so frightened and so stupified, that they made no answer. However, the Dean soon broke a pane of glass, and got the window open, and burst in and snatched Miss Edith, who was almost stifled, from off the bed, and carried her down the ladder. Young Seymour sprang up into the room after him, and seized little Agnes, whose bed was actually on fire, and the sleeve of her nightdress blazing, and her poor little arm, consequently, sadly burnt. The child screamed fearfully, and it was indeed a wonder that she was saved.

“Young Seymour could scarcely make his way through the smoke and the flames to the window ; but he did ; and bore her in his arms down the ladder, and gave her to her distracted father. He was a good deal scorched and singed himself, and his face is quite blistered, and his hair and whiskers burnt, but he will be all right in a short time again.

“You can fancy what a scene it was when my father and I arrived. We did not know which to attend to first. However, we did what we could, and it was a great comfort to us all when your father and aunt arrived ; and the two boys have been quite invaluable in their exertions to save all that they could from the fire, they were both of them so cool and so brave, and so willing to do exactly what they were told ; they were working away like horses when I left. It was your Aunt Emma’s kind proposal that Mrs.

Campbell and her two little suffering girls should be brought up here at once, and away from the scene of bustle, and excitement, and terror ; but it was some time before we dared to move them. Now that it is done, I feel convinced it was the best thing to do, and I hope my father and Dr. Scott will be here immediately to see after them."

"Mr. Birch," asked Aunt Emma, "is little Agnes's arm very much burnt ? She cried and moaned sadly all the way, in the carriage, from the Deanery here."

"Yes, it is a bad burn, and will cause her a good deal of pain ; but, really, when I think what she was rescued from, I only wonder that she was not more burnt."

"Young George Seymour behaved very well," then, said Aunt Emma. "It was his cool bravery which saved that child's life."

"Yes, indeed, it was," replied Mr. Birch.

"Oh, here comes my father, and Dr. Scott, and Mr. Howard. I will go and open the door for them."

And away he went.

The two doctors walked straight upstairs to see their patients, and Mr. Howard came into the dining-room. He went first to Aunt Emma, and kissed her tenderly, and said how much she had helped, and what a comfort she had been in that scene of distress. He then turned to his children and said—

"So papa's going to rob you of your beds, and nurse, and nursery, for a few days ; but I am sure my

darlings won't mind, but will willingly give them all up to their suffering little friends."

"Oh, no, we shan't mind, precious papa," answered Edith; "we are very glad to let them have our beds, and I am going to sleep in Grace's room, and Katie in Susan's."

"Papa," then asked Susan, "is Walter quite safe?"

"Yes, dear; Walter is quite safe, and is doing his utmost to help in the rescue of things from the smouldering flames; he, and Reginald and George Seymour have been of the greatest use, especially George Seymour, who really saved little Agnes's life."

"So Mr. Birch has been telling us," replied Susan.

"Papa," then whispered little Rosie, "I shan't call him the naughty boy ever again; but always the good, brave boy."

"He deserves that name, my Rosie, now," said her father; "but suppose you let papa have something to eat, instead of keeping him talking, for he is very hungry; and also he wants to be off again, down to the burning ruins to give what help he can, and let the Dean come up here to see his poor wife and children."

"One question, papa," said Susan, "and then no more. Where are Lucy and the two youngest Campbells?"

"Mrs. Trevor, the Canon's wife, has taken them in, and will keep them."

In a few minutes, Mr. Howard got up to go, but before he went, he said—

“I tell you what Susan, Grace, and you little ones may all do—go in the pony carriage to the nearest and best shop, and get some dolls, and a box of bricks, and some ivory letters, and some pretty books, and two work-boxes, and two desks. I shall give you £5 to spend, for Lucy and Edith and Agnes Campbell; for they have lost everything, and you must make it go as far as it can, and bring me home an account of how you spent it.”

“Oh, papa, how nice it will be to buy these things for our dear darling Lucy, and Edith, and Agnes,” said Katie. “I shall give Edith my best frock, because she has told me over and over again that she thinks it the prettiest frock she ever saw.”

“And may I give Agnes one of my frocks, papa?” asked Rosie. “They can’t wear their night-gowns always, you know; they must have something to wear.”

“You may settle that matter with Aunt Emma, my children,” said Mr. Howard; “for I must really be off; and you must consult with Aunt Emma which will be the best shop to go to for some books and toys.”

“Oh! the corner shop of High Street, of course, papa,” answered Katie; “we know that.”

Nevertheless, though Katie did know, Aunt Emma suggested a better shop, and then she told the little ones that they need not give their own frocks away, but that they should go to Mrs. Benson’s ware-

house and order some children's clothes to be sent up for inspection to-morrow morning. "You, Grace, and Susan will be able to tell her what kind of things she must send; and then, you know, loves, these dear little sufferers will have something else to wear besides their night-gowns; and I shall add £1 to papa's five, for books and pencils, and for a photograph-book, which we will give them, and fill it with photographs of all those who came to help them when they were in such trouble."

"Let us count them, aunty dear, before we go to get ready for the pony carriage—there's papa, one; you, aunty, two; Walter, three; Reginald, four; George Seymour, five."

"That will do for the present, darling Rosie," said Aunt Emma, "my head won't bear more, and also I don't wish you to lose any time; so now go and put your hats and cloaks on, and when the photograph-book comes home, I shall put into it the photographs of two little girls, not a hundred miles from my sofa, who were willing to give their frocks to their friends, and who, I have no doubt, will try to find a great many things to give them to make up for what they have lost by the fire."

So saying, Aunt Emma got up, gave the children each a kiss, and went to lie down on the drawing-room sofa, and all the girls went to get ready for their drive.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was a great disappointment to the young ones, when they returned home from their shopping expedition, to find that there was no one to whom they could tell the tale of what they had been doing; for Aunt Emma's head became so very bad, that by Dr. Birch's advice she had gone to bed. Mr. Howard had not come back from the burnt-down Deanery, nor had the boys. A tea-supper was ready for the two young ones in the housekeeper's room—a much more luxurious supper than Nursie ever treated her darlings to; but then it was a very rare treat indeed for Mrs. Salt (the housekeeper) to have the young ladies in her room for tea or supper; and so when she did get them, she thought she never could give them enough to eat. Little Elsie had tea with them; and to Elsie and Mrs. Salt they poured forth all they had to say about their purchases, and the things they had ordered by Aunt Emma's desire, &c.

“Look, Mrs. Salt,” said Rosie, untying one parcel which had been committed to her charge; “look at this lovely doll. Won't Agnes be pleased with it?”

"Elsie would like it," said the child, when she saw it.

"No, no, dear little Elsie; this is not for you," answered Rosie; "this is for Agnes, because you know, Elsie, her home has been burnt down, and all her dolls have been burnt, and her other toys, and all her clothes; so you must not have this doll. Don't cry, dear."

"What, Elsie," here asked Mrs. Salt, "are you crying because you can't have the young lady's doll? Why I never heard of such a thing! What a silly child to cry for nothing at all! Come here, and let me wipe those tears away, and then perhaps Miss Rose will show us some more of the beautiful things which she has bought; but not if you are to cry for them, Elsie."

"Here, Elsie, come and see my things," said Katie; "because I have got beautiful things, too, as well as Rosie. See, this is my doll, and it is for Edith; and we must dress it for her, because you know she won't have anything to dress it with, as all their chests of drawers, where they used to keep their things, are burnt. My doll has got black hair and black eyes, and Rosie's doll has got blue eyes and flaxen hair; so my doll is like you, Elsie, and Rosie's doll is like her. But there is no doll like me, because dolls never have brown hair, and what papa calls mine, green eyes. But I don't want to be like a doll; so I don't care a bit."

At this moment Nurse came into the room to see what her pets were about, and whether they had had a good tea and were happy, and to say that it was time for them to go to bed, and to kiss them and wish them good night. She had not intended to stay a minute ; but she could not get away. The children were so delighted to see her, and to show her all that they had got for Edith and Agnes, that it was quite ten minutes before Nurse was able to leave them, and to go back to the poor little ones who were lying in their beds upstairs.

"How is sweet little Agnes's arm, Nursie dear?" asked Rose ; "and how is Edith, dear Edith?"

"Miss Agnes's arm is very painful, dear ; but I have just put something on it which I hope will do it good. Miss Edith is better, and has had some nice hot toast and an egg, and I have settled her for the night, and hope to find her asleep when I go back. A little while ago she was asleep ; and she started up in such a terror, and cried out, 'Don't let me burnt to death, mamma ; don't let me be burnt to death. Oh, save me ! save me !' I could not pacify her for some time. But she is better now. And, my darlings, will you promise me to be as quiet as you can when you go upstairs, and in the morning when you are dressing and moving about, because we want to have the house so quiet for a day or two, till Mrs. Campbell, and Agnes, and Edith are better."

"Nursie, dear ; we will be like little mice," said

Rosie ; and we will creep upstairs without any shoes, and we will only speak in a low whisper, just as low as this."

And then she said something to Nurse so exceedingly low, that even Nurse could not make out what it was.

"You need not take your shoes off, nor need you speak quite so low," then said Nurse. "And now, good night ; and please, Mrs. Salt, don't let them stay up any longer, for they both look tired ; and will you put them on in the morning their pink muslin frocks ?"

And Nurse went away ; and in a few minutes the little girls, too, went up to bed, and were dressed and washed by Mrs. Salt, who managed pretty well, on the whole, for them.

In the morning they again had breakfast with Mrs. Salt and Elsie in the housekeeper's room ; but after prayers they went into the dining-room, and they there found Aunt Emma, and Walter, and Reginald, and Mr. Howard. Walter was full of the events of the preceding day ; he was telling Susan and Grace how Reginald and George Seymour and he had dashed through the blinding smoke, and through the burning window, and had managed to save a most valuable chest of plate, and another of papers, which were more valuable, the Dean had said to him, than the plate ; and how, when this was done, they had had just time enough to seize two old pictures which were falling from the

walls, and manage to carry them out safely ; but when they tried to go again for some books, they couldn't, and a policeman had been obliged to put his arms quite tight round George Seymour, and to hold him so, in order to prevent him from dashing into the house again to try and save some more things ; and that as he held him in his powerful arms, and as George was struggling to get free, crash, crash, crash, went the roof, and in it fell, burying everything beneath it ; and George Seymour would have been killed had not the policeman held him and prevented him from going again into the house.

“And,” said Walter, “the Dean’s great brougham horse, that brown handsome one, you know, Susan, which has often come here, and the little Shetland pony, were so awfully frightened at the fire, and the smoke, and the din, that they broke from out of the stable, and they went galloping along the road as hard as they could gallop, snorting and kicking almost all the way to London. We have not heard if they did any harm, but they were brought back by the toll-bar gate man, who had recognized them and caught them, for they stopped at the gate of themselves, because they are accustomed to stop there. And this morning we are going again to see if we can help to recover some of Mrs. Campbell’s jewels, and things of that kind. The ashes and the embers would be cool enough, people told us, this morning to poke about in them, and see what we can find. Lucy was breaking her heart

because a little gold chain which some one had just given her, with a blue enamel locket attached to it, would be melted away to nothing ; and she said it was the only gold chain she had ever had ; so I shall have a good look for it."

"I am afraid, my boy," said Mr. Howard, who had overheard this last sentence, "it will be like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay ; and still I wish you to go and give all the help you can, and if you don't find Lucy's chain and locket, you may, perhaps, find other things of more value. I am going myself as soon as the doctors have been here, and then I shall be able to give Lucy a true report of how her mother and her sisters are this morning. And now suppose we have some breakfast, and fortify ourselves for the work and bustle of the day."

Just as Walter seated himself at the breakfast-table, Katie crept quietly into the room, and put a little paper parcel in his hand.

"What's this for, Katie?" asked Walter. "Is it some sugar plums, because I am such a good boy?"

"It is not sugar plums at all," answered Katie, very indignantly ; "and you are not a good boy to say so ; and I shall take my parcel away and give it to Reginald," continued the aggrieved little maiden.

"No, no ! you shan't take it away," said Walter, holding it quite tight. "Let me see what it is. Why, it is your own gold chain and locket, and I dare say you want me to give them to Lucy, to make up

for her loss. Is it so, my little sister?" asked Walter, kissing her, and putting his arms right round her neck.

"Yes, Walter, I do want you to give them to Lucy, with my very best love."

"So I will, Katie dear; and now kiss me, and tell me you forgive me for thinking the parcel was full of sugar plums."

"I do forgive you, Walter, from the very bottom of my heart; and you are a good boy. And now I must go this very moment, for Rosie told me she wanted me for something very important."

"Run away, then," said Walter, "and don't keep Rosie waiting."

And away she ran; but what this very important matter for which Rose wanted her was, must remain a secret, because neither Rose nor Kate ever told any one.

When Katie had left the breakfast-room, Walter asked his father whether he should take her present down to Lucy, or not.

"Oh, yes, you may take it, my boy," replied Mr. Howard. "I wish my children to learn to give, and not only to receive. Nor should a generous impulse in a child ever be checked. The habit of giving needs cultivation, as do all good habits."

"But, papa, this is such a pretty thing, and looks so nice on her round white throat. Wouldn't another one do for Lucy, which could be bought?"

"That would not be Katie's present, Walter. No, Lucy may have this, and I will give my little Katie another on her next birthday ; but not before, so that she may not feel as though her generosity had been immediately rewarded. Did you ever hear that queer little story, Walter, about a wretched man who never could pass a certain public-house without being drawn in by the love of drink ? At last he made a resolution that he would not enter that public-house again. And he kept away from it for some time ; but one unlucky day he was obliged to go by it, and he did, surely enough, without going in ; and he went on for a hundred yards beyond it. Then, amazed at his own goodness, he exclaimed—

" ' Well done, resolution, you shall have a drop. '

"And back he went, and didn't leave that public-house till he was as bad as ever."

"Oh, papa, what a queer story ! but I can see what you mean by it, and that it does not do to reward every good action directly it is done."

This conversation was now interrupted by the arrival of the doctors ; and as Walter and Reginald had both of them finished their breakfasts, they left the room, and in a few minutes were off to the burnt-down Deanery, to re-commence their task of searching for spoils amid the smoking smouldering ruins.

Mr. Howard waited to hear what the doctors had to say. They were a long time upstairs, and then they had a private interview with the Dean, so that

Aunt Emma and Mr. Howard began to be weary of waiting for them. At last they came into the breakfast-room ; and their report, on the whole, was satisfactory. Mrs. Campbell, who had had a slight concussion of the brain, was still in a dreamy, unconscious state, very much bruised and shaken, and with one wrist dislocated. The great thing for her was quiet. She was not yet in a state to inquire or to be told the extent of the mischief done by the fire, and it would probably be some days before it would be right to tell her. Edith was really better ; but was to be kept in a dark room, and asleep as much as possible for the next four-and-twenty hours. Little Agnes, who was not old enough to have been as terrified as poor Edith had been, was suffering very much from her burnt arm, and was very uneasy and restless, and needed a good deal of care ; but still there was no apparent reason why a few days should not see them all much better. And with this degree of comfort Mr. Howard left his home, and went at once to see Lucy, who really was anxious to know about her mamma and sisters. The Dean could not go to tell her himself, because he did not wish to leave the house, or be away from Mrs. Campbell while she lay in that unconscious state. Poor Lucy, she cried bitterly when she saw Mr. Howard, and heard how ill her dear mamma and her own sister Edith were, and little Agnes, too.

“It is very unkind that I mayn’t go to see

them, Mr. Howard," she said ; " very unkind indeed ; and the doctors are cruel wicked men to say so."

" No, Lucy, no ! you must be more gentle in your language, dear child. They are not cruel or wicked ; but only doing what's right for you, and mamma, and sisters. But would you like to see Rose and Kate ? because I will send them down this afternoon to see you if you wish it ; they are very anxious to come, and they have a great deal to say to you."

" Yes," said Lucy ; " I want them to come ; but I want much more to see my own mamma and sisters. Please, Mr. Howard, do take me back with you." And Lucy's tears broke out again.

" Lucy," then said Mr. Howard ; " this won't do ; you are old enough to be more wise and reasonable, and once for all, I say again, you are not to see your mother or your sisters for a few days. But, my dear Lucy, instead of fretting and murmuring, you ought to be very thankful that no lives have been lost in the fire, and that your two sisters, who were in such very great peril, were by God's mercy rescued. I hope, dear, you will try and remember all this, and not make yourself and others unhappy by fretting. Is not that Walter ? I think I saw him pass the window."

" Yes," said Lucy ; " I saw him pass. He told me he should come and try if he could find my gold chain and locket in the ashes."

And at this moment the door opened, and Walter came into the room.

"Have you found my gold chain and locket, Walter?" asked Lucy.

"I have not yet been to look, Lucy. I have been to examine the horse and the pony, and to see if they were hurt by their gallop and their fright; but I don't think they are. Your coachman says he won't have anybody in the brougham the first time he puts the horse in again, as after such a fright he says he won't answer for what the horse mayn't do. What a good thing it is that the brougham was not burnt. Here, Lucy, this little parcel is for you. It is from Katie, and she sent it with her very best love."

"What is it, Walter?" asked Lucy.

"Open it and see," answered Walter.

And Lucy did open it, and saw in a moment that it was Katie's own gold chain and locket.

"Oh, Walter, it is Katie's chain and locket; the one I have always thought so beautiful."

"Well, Lucy, it is yours now," said Walter; "and so if I can't find your own old one, you won't so much mind, now that you have got Katie's."

"How kind of my dear sweet Katie it was to send me this beautiful thing! Will you give her a thousand kisses and a thousand thanks for me, Mr. Howard?"

"No, dear, I certainly can't promise to do anything so difficult as that. Why, it would take me

quite an hour, and I have no hour to spare ; so you must give her your thousand kisses and your thousand thanks yourself this afternoon when she comes to see you."

And in the afternoon of that day Rosie and Kate did come to see Lucy, and Lucy had the opportunity of kissing Katie to her heart's content, and thanking her too. When this was over, Rosie said, "Dear Lucy, Aunt Emma and papa have sent you this parcel of things, because all yours have been burnt."

"What's in the parcel?" asked Lucy, eagerly ; "let us open it and see."

And the parcel was opened, and in it was a work-box, and a desk, and a pencil, penknife, slate, and many other things.

"Oh !" said Lucy, "the workbox is much more beautiful than my old one, and so is the desk ; but still, you know, I am very sorry that all my things have been burnt."

"And so are we, dear Lucy," answered Rose ; "and that is why our papa and Aunt Emma sent you these things ; and Edith is to have just the same given her when she is better."

In the mean time Katie's eye had been examining Lucy, and then she said, "Lucy, how odd you look ; your frock is up above your knees, and you have got such funny stockings on—just like what the charity-school children wear."

And both Rose and Kate laughed at this ; but

Lucy was very indignant and angry with them for laughing at her and said—

“How very unkind it is of both of you to laugh at me, when you know I have nothing else to wear.”

“You look so funny, Lucy; we can’t help laughing,” answered Katie; “but there are beautiful clothes coming up to our house for you, for Aunt Emma made your Nurse tell her this morning what you would like, and she has ordered all sorts of things to be made for you, and Edith, and Agnes. The first frocks to be sent home are to be some light blue silks, and some white muslins, and some pink, like these of ours which we have on to-day.”

And so the children chattered on about one thing or another for some time. Then the three boys came—Walter, Reginald, and George Seymour—and asked them if they would not like to come and see the ruins, because they would show them everything, if they would.

“Oh, yes! we want very much to go,” answered the girls.

“Come along, then,” said Walter.

And off they went. But it is quite vain to try to describe the scene of desolation they went to; or the ravages that the fire had made; or Lucy’s distress at the state of her home; so we will let all that alone, and tell how Kate and Rose, by Mrs. Trevor’s wish, stayed and had tea with Lucy and her own little baby girl, Maude. And then the pony carriage was

ordered, and they started home. Mr. Howard had told them to return home by the Seckars' house, which was a little longer than the straight way ; but as it was a beautiful soft, warm evening, Grace and Susan, who had walked down to the Trevors', to meet the children, and take them home in a pony carriage, said that it would do them no harm to have a longer drive, and so they went to the Seckars' to inquire about Rose. They saw Edith and Florence, her two sisters, who told them Rose was certainly better and out of danger, but that her broken leg and arm would be a long time getting well—still, they were all much happier and more hopeful about her. And then, when they had talked a good deal about Rose, Edith and Florence wanted so much to hear about the fire at the Deanery, and what had become of the little Campbells, and everything, in short, that Rose and Kate, Grace and Susan, could tell them.

The clock struck seven before they left the Seckars' house, and it was half-past seven, or nearer a quarter to eight, when they reached home. Nurse was beginning to be uneasy about them. She opened the hall door for them herself, when the carriage drove up, and said—

“Why, my bairns, what has kept you out so late?”

“Oh, Nursie, dear,” answered Rose ; “we have been both to the Trevors', to see Lucy, and then we went to see the burnt down Deanery, and then to

the Seckars', and little Rose is really better, and we have had so much to do that we could not come home earlier."

"Well, I am glad you are come at last," said Nurse. "And now, dears, go to Mrs. Salt's room, she has got a glass of new milk and some bread and butter for you, and then ask her to get you ready for bed, for I am sure you are both right down tired, after all you have done to-day."

"And please, Miss Susan, master told me to tell you that supper would not be ready till half-past nine, and that he expected both Dr. Birch and his son to remain for it."

When Nurse had seen her children off to Mrs. Salt's room, and had delivered her message to Susan, she went back to her patient, kind, watching care over Edith and Agnes. This state of things continued for some days. Edith was the first to get better, and to be allowed to leave the nursery, and see Kate and Rose. Little Agnes suffered much for some time, and Mrs. Campbell recovered very slowly. Lucy was constantly backwards and forwards between the Trevors' and the hall. And so passed away those Easter holidays which had been anticipated with such pleasure, and which had been made memorable by the frightful catastrophe of the Deanery being burnt down.

As soon as Mrs. Campbell was able to bear the journey, she went with the Dean to the sea-side, and

they took Agnes, and Edith, and the two baby boys with them. Lucy, by Mr. Howard's invitation, came to stay at the hall with his children, and to be under Mrs. Long, as a pupil, and subject entirely to her authority, as his own girls were.

Mr. Howard was very much amused to hear the children discussing together whether it would not be a very good thing to get up a bazaar, and raise money enough to buy Lucy, and Edith, and Agnes, and the little boys, plenty of new clothes, and toys, and books, and all sorts of things, which they had lost in the fire. This discussion took place between Rose and Kate, and Florence and Edith Seckar, and Lucy Campbell. Walter also was rather disposed to think it might be a very good thing, and would be "jolly fun." Susan and Grace thought the Dean and Mrs. Campbell perhaps would not like it, and would not give their consent; and as Mr. Howard knew for certainty that they would be greatly distressed to have such a scheme even talked about, he stopped it at once, and said—

"No, no, dears; this plan of yours won't do at all, and I had rather you said no more about it; Susan and Grace thought very rightly when they said that they did not think the Dean and Mrs. Campbell would like it. But if you are all bent upon working for a bazaar, you may work away, and get your work sold for the benefit of the hospital. You now know what sad things accidents and fires are, because you

have seen something of them both, and have had a little experience in these matters lately.

"But, papa, we don't want to work for a bazaar; but we want to have a bazaar ourselves, and have all the fun."

"Or rather, my Rosie," said her papa, "all the trouble."

"Never mind the trouble, dear papa," said Susan, "if you will let us have one we will take all the trouble on ourselves. Walter, will you help? because you know, it must, of course, be when you and I are at home. The little girls could not do anything worth having without us."

"I'll help, Susan," answered Walter. "That is to say, I'll help to buy a bit, and to sell; but I won't help to make. You don't expect boys to sit down and stitch pen-wipers, and to do girls' work and nonsense. I'll sell away, and help to put up the tents; when it is to be."

"Has papa given his consent that it is to be at all?" then asked Mr. Howard, "because, I suppose, Walter, you know that that is rather an important item in the matter."

"Yes, papa! to be sure! but you will give us your consent, won't you? Do—please do."

"Do—please do," was echoed by the three girls, and by Lucy, Edith, and Florence.

"Well, if Aunt Emma does not say nay, I won't."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, dearest papa; but

may we go and ask Aunt Emma at once?" said Rosie, "and then we shall know whether we may have our bazaar or not. Here she is."

And as she came into the room, she was greeted by such a din and clamour of voices that she was fairly bewildered.

"Aunt Emma, will you let us have a bazaar?" from one.

"Aunt Emma, papa says we may, if you say we may," from another.

"Aunt Emma, do say yes. We want it so very much," from a third. And so on.

Poor Aunt Emma. She had a great mind to leave the room, and run away, and hide herself in the peace and quiet of her own room; but Mr. Howard came to her rescue.

"Be silent, my children—be silent, one and all, and let me speak to Aunt Emma, and tell her of this strange and unaccountable fancy which has taken possession of all your brains."

Then, having obtained silence, he told her. The moment he ceased to speak, the hubbub began again.

"Say yes, Aunt Emma—darling Aunt Emma, please to say yes." And so on, as before.

And Aunt Emma, though she felt rather distressed at the prospect did say "Yes." And that little word of hers occasioned such joy, and got her so many thanks, and so many kisses, that she was indeed at last obliged to beat a retreat, and go back to her own room

All this took place in the school-room, at the hour of the children's tea—the last day of the holidays, and Susan's, and Grace Richmond's, and Walter's, and Reginald's last day, too. And because it was the last day, Mr. Howard had asked Edith and Florence Seckar to spend the afternoon with his girls; and they had come; and this bazaar scheme was what those busy, active young brains and spirits devised and planned that afternoon, as the thing of all others that they should like the best.

Before the day closed, the scheme had progressed thus far, that the bazaar was to take place in June. Walter's holidays did not begin till August; but he could get two days' leave in June, and it was deemed better to have it then than later in the year. Susan said that she knew she could come home for a few days at any time that her father asked for her to do so; and Grace was to be included in the invitation.

Oh, how happy and how full of news to tell Nurse, Rose and Kate were that night when they went to bed. They had planned what they should begin to do on the morrow; and they wanted Nurse to promise them that they should be called much earlier the next morning, that they might set to work. And with this they went to sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

BY twelve o'clock of the next day, Susan and Grace Richmond, Walter and Reginald Owen, had left, and were gone back to their different schools. Lucy Campbell, Rose, and Kate, were sauntering about on the terrace, feeling rather dull, and as though they did not know what to do with themselves.

"I wish it was four o'clock," said Kate, "and then Mrs. Long would be come, and dear little Alice; but it is only twelve, and I have nothing to do."

"Have you really nothing to do?" said Mr. Howard. "Why, my Katie, you are indeed to be pitied. I know a little boy who used always to be saying to his mother, 'Do give me something to do—please do;' so now I must find 'something' for you to do. I thought you were going to be 'so dreadfully busy to-day preparing work for the bazaar.'"

"But, papa," answered Katie, "we can't get anybody to help us this morning. Aunt Emma said she really could not have us with her till after luncheon, she had so many letters to write; and Nurse said she wanted to put our rooms straight, and get ready little Alice's bed; and she would not let us stay in the

nursery, because you know, papa, the room was all altered when Edith and Agnes were in it, and now it is to be made right for us again."

"This is a sad tale of woe, Katie, is it not?" then said Mr. Howard; "and there never were such unhappy persecuted miserable little girls before, I dare say."

"But we are not miserable, or unhappy, or persecuted, papa, and you know that very well," answered Katie, rather indignantly. "I don't like you to say so, for you are only laughing at me."

"Well, Katie, suppose you, and Rose, and Lucy, come and walk with me, and that will give you something to do. What say you to this, little girls?"

"We say yes, papa; we say yes!"

"Come, then," said Mr. Howard; and off they started.

After they had been walking and chatting for a few minutes, their father asked Rose and Kate whether either of them or Lucy could find out this puzzle:—

"Think of a number," he began.

"Any number I like, papa?" asked Rose.

"Any even number you like, Rosie," was the answer.

"Then, papa, I have thought," said the child.

"Double it, Rosie," Mr. Howard went on.

"I have doubled it, papa. What comes next? I thought of—"

"Oh, don't tell me what number you have thought of; I don't want to know; but add twenty to it."

"Oh, papa, that will be very hard," said Rosie; "but—I have added it."

"Now, then, halve it, Rosie."

"Wait a minute, papa; I can't do it in a great hurry. I have done it. You may go on."

"Then," said Mr. Howard, "take away the number you first thought of, and ten remains."

"Quite right, papa; quite right. But how did you know? You must have guessed that it was six I thought of, and so have got it right."

"But, Rosie, I can't see your thoughts, and I don't think I did guess that you had chosen the number six."

"How do you do it, Mr. Howard?" asked Lucy. "May I try?"

"And may I try?" chimed in Katie.

"You may both try," said Mr. Howard. "Only one at a time."

And they did try over and over again, and Mr. Howard was invariably right. Sometimes the children chose high numbers; sometimes they chose low; they tried in every way they could to puzzle papa, and to make him say wrong; but in vain, for he was always right, and not one of them could find out how he did it. At last they said they should give it up, for they should never find it out, if they went on trying for a thousand hours; and Lucy drew

off their attention by gathering a prickly holly leaf, and saying she was going to make that holly leaf tell her how much Edith loved her.

"Holly leaves can't speak, you silly girl," said Kate.

"My holly leaf shall speak to me," said Lucy ; "and I am not a silly girl ; and I shan't show you how to do it if you say so, Katie."

"Show me, Lucy," asked Rosie.

And Lucy began with a very mysterious air putting her finger on each prickly of the leaf successively, to say—"very much, greatly, little, not at all ; very much, greatly, little, not at all ; very much—" and then she stopped, and said triumphantly—

"Does not my leaf speak the truth, now, Katie, when it tells me that Edith loves me very much ? because the last prickly of the leaf always says how much you are loved. Let me find out how much you love me, papa," said Rosie, very eagerly. "Do get me a beautiful leaf."

And papa, with an amused face, got her a beautiful leaf ; but this beautiful leaf behaved very badly, for the last prickly of that leaf—the true prickly, as Lucy called it—said, 'Not at all.' Poor little Rosie was so disappointed that she almost burst into tears ; but papa comforted her, and tossed the cruel leaf away, and gave her another, and this other leaf was a much better one than the first had been, for its last prickly said 'Greatly.' Oh, you can't think what amusement

these leaves gave the children. They gathered a great many ; and as they went on their way, they kept questioning the leaves—first how one person loved them, and then how another did, and so on, till they had gone through all their friends. They enjoyed their walk with papa very much, and when they returned home they were so surprised and so delighted to find that Mrs. Long and little Alice had arrived, though they had not expected them till four o'clock. Nurse could scarcely take their walking things off, and make them tidy for dinner ; they were so eager to go to Mrs. Long's room and see Alice. At length she let them go, and away they ran and knocked at the door, and said—

“ May we come in, please, Mrs. Long ; we want to see your little Alice ? ”

Alice was rather shy, and hid behind her mother's dress ; but Rosie went up to her, and said “ peep,” and that won the little creature's heart in a minute, and she let Rosie put her arms round her neck and kiss her ; then Katie and Lucy must needs do the same, and they called her a darling little creature and a sweet little pet, and wanted to take her into Aunt Emma's room ; but no, little Alice was very good as long as she was near her mother : but no coaxing, no kissing, nothing, would induce her to let go her mother's hand—

“ Alice will stay here ; Alice will stay with Mammie ; Alice don't want to see Aunt Emma.”

"Will Alice come and have some dinner?" asked Rose, on hearing the dinner-bell ring.

"Yes, Alice will," answered the child, without the least hesitation.

And down she went, one hand held by Rose and the other by Kate.

After dinner the scheme for the bazaar was told to Mrs. Long, and the children asked her to tell them what they could do; and they brought for her inspection all the stores that they could collect, and some beautiful pieces of velvet and silk which Aunt Emma had given them. And then they said—

"Do tell us, dear Mrs. Long, what we can do."

"I am sure I can make some pen-wipers," said Katie, "and some bead mats, and some bead scent-bags; only these are all the beads I have got, and they are not nearly enough."

"I had such heaps of beautiful beads," then said Lucy, "and they have all been burnt in the fire. I shall never get such lovely ones again."

"Yes, Lucy, I think the shops have got as beautiful beads in them now as they had when yours were bought, so that you may, perhaps, get quite as lovely ones again."

"But, Mrs. Long, I have no money, and my mamma said, before she went away, she could only spare me half a crown, because she should have so many things to buy which had been burnt in the fire."

"Lucy," said Rosie, "I have got one shilling, and I will give it to you to buy some beads."

"I shall want lots of money to buy my things, too," says Kate; "but my papa must give it to me, because I have got none."

By-and-by papa came into the school-room, to speak to Mrs. Long, and to see little Alice; and then the three girls began to pour out their many wants for this bazaar.

"We want money to buy beads, papa, and silk, and cloth for pen-wipers and for dolls—and for such heaps of things—because, you know, papa darling, that there are heaps of things at a bazaar."

"But, Rosie, do you want to make papa a beggar, and send him to the workhouse?"

"No, papa; but you are very rich, indeed. Walter told me you had a great deal of money, and Lucy says she thinks you must have as much as the Queen."

"Oh, what wise little things children are," said Mr. Howard, with a smile, "or rather what silly little things they are when they talk about matters they don't understand; and if they did understand what they were talking about, they would not make such a great mistake as to call papa an exceedingly rich man, which he is not, and never wishes to be; but still, Lucy, though I have not as much money as the Queen has, I can find for you, and for Rose, and for Kate, one sovereign apiece, to be spent in materials

for this bazaar ; and if Mrs. Long will kindly help you to work, I shall find another for her."

"Yes," said Mrs. Long, "I certainly will help, and I think with four sovereigns we ought to be able to buy things enough to carry us on for some time."

"But, papa," asked Rosie, "when may we go to the shop, and get what we want?"

"Well, dear, you may go this afternoon if you like, and if Mrs. Long is willing to go with you ; and I will order the waggonet, and it will take you all, and Aunt Emma, who has just told me she has some purchases to make."

The project delighted the young ones, and they all went, little Alice included, and, guided by Aunt Emma and Mrs. Long, the children made very satisfactory purchases, and the next day they set vigorously to work, not only at their lessons, but also for the bazaar. Rosie received a letter from Susan, after she had been a week at school, which was a great pleasure, so much so that you shall hear what Susan said. She began—

"My dearest little Rosie,—

"Grace Richmond and I arrived quite safely at school. We got in just in time for tea. A good many of the girls at our school have promised to work for our bazaar. Some of them are going to make beautiful things. I shall work some smoking-caps, because Walter told me they would be

sure to sell ; and Grace will dress two large dolls, as large as the one papa gave Katie on her last birthday. To-day several of us went to have our photographs taken, and I send you one of Grace's and one of mine. I had not been taken with my hair done back in this new way, so I send it to you because it is different to the one you have got. Will you ask papa to have Nero taken ? One of the girls is making a collection of dogs' photographs, and I am sure Nero would make a beautiful one, and I have promised it to her, only it has never been done.

" Give my love to them all at home, and kiss Katie for me.

" I am your affectionate sister

" SUSAN."

On Grace Richmond's photograph was written at the back—

" To my loving little friend Rosie, from G. R."

This letter from Susan, and the two photographs, was read and shown to Aunt Emma, and to papa, and to nurse, and to Mrs. Salt and Elsie. And papa was exceedingly amused at Susan's request that Nero's photograph might be taken, and more amused that a young lady should want to have a whole book-full of dogs' photographs. But he promised to get Nero done, and the white Persian cat too, by Rosie's especial request.

A few days after this Rose and Kate were both

summoned down to the hall by their father. When they came, he said—

“Now let me look at you both, and see if you will do.”

They could not think what he meant for a minute, and whilst he looked at them ; but they soon guessed, for he turned round to a strange man, and asked—

“Will these dresses come out well, or shall I have them changed ?”

“No,” answered the man ; “they need not be changed ; they are a very good colour.”

“Are we to be photographed, papa ?” then asked Rosie.

“Yes, love, you are ; and I want you to be done with your cat, and Katie with Nero.”

“Oh, papa, how funny I shall look ! What am I to do with pussy ?”

So saying she seated herself in a large easy-chair, and wound one arm round the white cat, and looked so picturesque and lovely, that the photographer said, “Oh, sir, if the young lady could but stay so till I am ready, I should like to take her just as she is now ; it would make such a sweet picture.”

But as he would not be ready for the next quarter of an hour, she could not stay so ; but her father managed to put her in the same position when he was ready, and it was a very successful photograph. Katie, too, came out very nicely. She was seated on the ground, and Nero lying down before her, with his

two great paws stretched out. Then Nero was done alone for Susan's friend's benefit. Nurse and Aunt Emma both begged for the two little girls to be taken together; and so they were; Rosie curled up in an arm chair, and Katie standing beside her.

When all this was done, the children said that Elsie and Alice must be done; and they were so very urgent in the matter, and so eager about it, that Mr. Howard sent for them both, and Mrs. Long. When they came, he asked Mrs. Long if she would object to have her little girl photographed; and when she said she should not, Alice was taken standing up on a little stool, and peeping into a cage full of canary birds, which stood on a table at her side. Then Elsie was done, sitting down on the floor, and dressing her doll. All the children were sadly disappointed when the photographer said he must take the photographs away, and that he should not be able to send them back finished for a week or ten days.

"We want them this very day," said Kate; "we can't possibly wait such a very long time before we see them."

"Nevertheless you must wait, my little impatient girl," said her father; "and now be off and finish your lessons before dinner, for I am going to send you for a good long drive this lovely afternoon; and, either going or returning, I wish you to call at the Seckars, and inquire how Rose is going on."

"Oh, that will be nice, papa," said Rosie; "and we

can also ask them to begin at once to work for the bazaar."

Not many days after this, Lucy, and Kate, and Elsie, got into disgrace, by doing—what do you think? Why, it was this. Lucy and Kate ran down one evening by themselves to the housekeeper's room. There they found Elsie. They played with her for a few minutes; then Lucy began to open the cupboards, some of which were unlocked.

Kate said, "Lucy, don't open the cupboards; Mrs. Salt does not like us to do so, and we never do."

"Naughty Miss Lucy," said Elsie; "I will tell Mrs. Salt."

But Lucy did not mind what they said to her, but went on opening one cupboard and opening another; at last she caught sight of a pot of most inviting-looking apricot jam.

"My favourite jam," said Lucy. "Oh, I must have some; and so shall you, Katie; and so shall Elsie."

"I won't have any," said Katie.

"Oh, yes, you will!" answered Lucy.

"Elsie, dear, come to me. Now put your finger in the jam, and Katie shall suck it."

Elsie did what she was bid to do by Lucy, and Katie could not resist the temptation, and she sucked Elsie's finger over and over again; Lucy and Elsie doing the same. They all three ate a great deal of the jam in this curious way, till Lucy said, "We

must not have any more ; Mrs. Salt will find out that the jam is gone if we don't stop."

So saying she put the pot of jam back in the cupboard, and then she went upstairs with Kate and Elsie ; and they did not tell anybody that they had been in the housekeeper's room. By and by Mrs. Salt came in to get the dessert ready for the parlour dinner ; she went to the cupboard for the pot of apricot jam, which she had put there, and, to her astonishment, it was nearly empty. She asked the servants about it ; but none of them had been in her room. One of them, however, said, "That she fancied she had heard the young ladies talking there."

"My young ladies," said Mrs. Salt, "I never knew them touch a thing in my room ; it must be Elsie—little monkey ; if it is her, I'll teach her better."

And Mrs. Salt went in search of Elsie. She found her playing with little Alice in Mrs. Long's room, whilst Mrs. Long was dressing. Mrs. Salt told Mrs. Long what she had come for, and why she wanted the child, and how the jam was gone.

"Elsie," then said Mrs. Long, "did you eat the jam ?"

Elsie began to cry.

"Don't cry, Elsie, but answer me, dear : did you eat the jam ?"

"The little ladies made me," said Elsie.

"Which of the little ladies ?" said Mrs. Long.

"Miss Katie and Miss Lucy ; they made me dip

my fingers in the pot, and then they sucked the jam."

"Elsie, you should not have done what they told you to do ; you knew it was not right in them to tell you to do so, or in you to do it ; but you are a little girl, and so I shall ask Mrs. Salt to forgive you, if you will promise me never to do so again—not even if the little ladies should ask you. Now, you may go ; I shan't let you play any more to-day with Alice."

And then Mrs. Long said quietly to Mrs. Salt—

"You must not punish her more than giving her bread for a day or two, that she may remember not to touch jam again ; it is not her fault."

"And I am sure," said Mrs. Salt, "it is that Miss Lucy's, that mischievous young lady, and not our Miss Katie's."

"I dare say," answered Mrs. Long, "that Miss Lucy led her into it ; but she ought to have known better ; she is old enough to know that she was doing wrong. I will go and speak to them both."

Mrs. Long went in search of the little girls, and found them both in the school-room.

"Lucy," she said, "what made you go down to the housekeeper's room and take the jam ? Mrs. Salt has just been up to tell me about it."

"I did not take it," Lucy here began.

"Hush ! Lucy ; no stories, if you please : if you did not take it, you helped to eat it. I shall not let

you speak again, because I can't trust you. Kate, come here, and tell me how it all happened."

And Kate came and stood beside Mrs. Long, and told her how little Alice had dipped her finger in the jam, and she and Lucy had sucked it.

"Who told Alice to do it?" then asked Mrs. Long.

Katie was silent, and looked at Lucy. Lucy saw her look, and as she was beginning to be ashamed of having said she had not done it, she now recovered herself, and said, gently—

"Mrs. Long, it was me; I found the pot of jam in a cupboard, and I made Alice put her fingers in."

"Lucy," then said Mrs. Long, "you did very wrong to act in this way; you led two younger girls than yourself into a greedy sly act; and you did much more wrong to deny having done it when I first questioned you; but I am glad you thought better about that, and have now spoken the truth. My dear Lucy, taking the jam was nothing compared to telling a falsehood. I am very sorry that you should be so greedy, and so weak, as not to be able to see a pot of jam without wanting to eat it; and I am still more sorry you led Kate and little Alice to do it too; but Katie, love, I hope you will never do so again. I think I may trust you. You must learn to be strong enough to say no, when you are asked to do what you feel and know you had better not do; and to make you remember this for the future, I shall give you six of papa's pocket-handkerchiefs to hem,

which must be done before you work any more for the bazaar ; and to you, Lucy, I shall give an additional half-hour of lessons, either sums or copy writing, for the next ten days, because you are much the most to be blamed. And I hope you will learn to be more and more watchful over yourself, and not strengthen in yourself the habit and practice of saying what is not true. Bad habits are very easy to form, and very hard to get rid of. Can you tell of any instance in the Bible when a lie was punished instantaneously ? ”

“ Do you mean the case of Ananias and Sapphira ? ”

“ Yes, dear Katie, I do ; and does not that show us how God hates lies ? As you learn to know your Bible more and more, you will see that there is a great deal in it which speaks of the sin of telling lies. Perhaps it will be well for me to tell you now, whilst we are talking about this very important subject, an anecdote, or rather a fact, which, it is my belief, occurred half a century ago, in the Market-place of Devizes, a town in Somersetshire. A woman there, in that market-place, told a lie ; she was accused of doing so ; and then she declared that she was innocent, and that she had only spoken the truth, and she dared to appeal to God to strike her dead on the spot if she had told this lie of which she was accused ; knowing all the time that she had done it. And the God of truth heard her appeal, and did strike her dead on the spot. I have been told that this fact is

commemorated on a monument placed over the place where the unhappy woman fell down dead."

This story awed the children greatly ; they both sobbed, and Lucy said—

"I am very sorry, Mrs. Long, for what I have done ; will you forgive me ?"

"Yes, dear Lucy," said Mrs. Long, kissing her affectionately ; "and you must pray to God to forgive you, and to bless you, by giving you his Holy Spirit—the spirit of truth."

Kate then crept up to Mrs. Long for a kiss too, and a kind word of encouragement, which she got.

"Now, dears, both of you," said Mrs. Long, "run down to Mrs. Salt and tell her that you are sorry for what you did ; and tell little Elsie also, that it was very naughty of you to make her put her fingers in the jam, and that you have both got a punishment for it."

The children went and did what Mrs. Long told them to do. When they came back to the school-room, she said—

"I have a cheerful story to tell you—and a true one, too—about truth. It is this—that some years ago a Welsh boy came to a clergyman who lived in the middle of England ; this clergyman was by birth a Welshman, and that is why the boy came to him, and asked him for his help and advice. The boy said he wanted to go to London, and to get an introduction to some one

who would give him something to do to make his livelihood.

“‘Well,’ said the clergyman, ‘Andrew Louis, I know one man who has a good business in London, and I will give you an introduction to him ; but he is a strict fellow, and perhaps at first he will be angry and impatient with you, for you are sure to be awkward and tiresome till you know your business. Now Andrew, if you get into any trouble through carelessness, or ignorance, or heedlessness, as you are pretty nearly certain to do, for I never knew a lad who did not, and I have known scores of them, don’t think to get out of your trouble by telling a lie ; that will never do, Andrew, it will only make bad worse, and get you displeasure both from God and man. Speak the truth let it cost you what it will. Your master may be angry, but never mind his anger half so much as you fear a lie. Now, there is the letter of introduction, and mind my words—always speak the truth, and don’t be down-hearted at being found fault with, for you certainly will be.’

“With the letter in his pocket, Andrew went to London. The tradesman to whom the letter was written, knowing the clergyman who wrote it, found a place for Andrew. He was very awkward and exceedingly clumsy at first ; he made great mistakes ; and he tried the patience of his master in many ways ; but still he persevered, and his master thought e would give him a little longer trial, when one

unlucky day he broke a large pane of glass. His master was not in the shop when he did it, but coming in soon afterwards, he saw the broken pane.

“ ‘Who has done this?’ he asked, very angrily, and looking all round at the young men in the shop.

“ ‘I didn’t, sir ; I didn’t, sir,’ came from one and from another, and it was just about to come from Andrew’s mouth, for he knew no one had seen him do it, when the clergyman’s words occurred to his mind, and without a moment’s more hesitation he said—

“ ‘I did it, sir.’

“The master was exceedingly angry, and told him that he could not put up with him any longer, and that he must leave. Poor Andrew was sadly cast down at this ; still he had the comfort of feeling that God had enabled him to resist the temptation to tell a lie, and to speak the truth. And that was a comfort, even though he had a sleepless night ; and in the morning he looked so pale and anxious that his countenance attracted his master’s attention, and he called him in and said—

“ ‘Andrew, I was very angry with you yesterday, for, indeed, you do sadly provoke me, but as you told me the truth about the window, I shall give you another trial, which I certainly should not have done had you told me a lie.’

“And from that day Andrew did better. He got more confidence in himself ; he gained his master’s esteem ; he ceased to be so awkward ; he rose higher

and higher ; and he is now a rich and prosperous man."

So ended the talk about truth, and neither Lucy nor Kate forgot the lesson which they had learned by the fault of that day.

CHAPTER VIII.

AUNT EMMA, by Mrs. Long's request, had not asked the little girls once into her room till after Katie had hemmed her punishment pocket-handkerchiefs, and Lucy had had her week of extra half-hour punishment lessons; and indeed the weather was so lovely, and the children were so busy in their gardens, that they did not find so much time for working for the bazaar as they had expected to find; nor so much time to pay visits to Aunt Emma in her room as in the cold and dreary winter months. But the day came on which Mrs. Long was to take her dear little Alice back to the aunt with whom she generally lived, and very very sorry the children were that that day had come, they were all so fond of Alice. It was on a Saturday, and Mr. Howard had told his children that if they liked to ask Edith and Florence Seckar up to the Hall to spend the day, and get on with some work for the bazaar, whilst Mrs. Long was absent, they might do so; and as they said they should like it, Edith and Florence were asked, and they came. It was a most sweet day—warm and lovely as sometimes the days towards the end of May are—warm enough

for the children to sit out of doors, and have their work and books out there instead of in the house. It was about twelve o'clock when Mrs. Long and little Alice went away. The parting was quite a sad one; Alice cried, and kept saying, "she wanted to stay; she wanted to stay so badly, and not to go back to Aunt Mary." Mrs. Salt comforted her by giving her a piece of plum cake, and Nurse by giving her a doll, and the children by innumerable kisses, and promises "she should come again and stay a very long time." At last they were off, and then the little girls ran up to the school-room to get all the work which they wanted to do that day ready, before Florence and Edith Seckar arrived.

They came in good time for luncheon, and the moment it was over, all the young ones went straight to the great cedar-tree, beneath which Nurse had placed a table and some seats, and all the working materials, and a comfortable arm-chair for Aunt Emma, if she could find time to give the children the pleasure of her society for a little while during the afternoon. Elsie was invited to join the working-party, and papa promised Rosie and Katie that he would come and look at them when they were fairly settled.

It took some time for them to settle and to decide what each should do. At length Nurse came and gave her advice, and found something pretty and tolerably easy for one and all to do. Then they set to work most vigorously.

"Oh, I wish Mrs. Long was here, for she would read to us, or that Aunt Emma would come and tell us a story, we should work so much better," said Rosie.

"Edith, you can tell beautiful stories, and so can Florence," then said Lucy Campbell, "and I hope you will begin at once, and tell us something; don't you hope so, too, Katie?"

"Yes, I do," answered Katie; "please, Edith, begin."

"I have no story to tell you," said Edith, "and it is not fair to make me the only one to tell stories."

"But, Edith, you are so much the oldest," said Rosie, "and you know lots of things to tell."

"I'll tell you one story," said Edith, "if you will all tell one, too; and not without."

"Yes, yes!" said Florence, "let it be so. Katie, darling, I'll help you when your turn comes, because you are the youngest, and my pet. Do, Edith, begin."

"Shall I tell you a very grave story, then?" said Edith, "one I read the other day, and one that Rosie has made me tell her several times, when mamma has left me to help to take care of her lately?"

"Yes, do tell it us," said our little Rosie. "I shan't mind, though it is very grave."

And Edith began—

"I can't tell it you half so nicely as if I had the book to read it to you out of. It is one story of a

great many, in a most interesting book ; but I like it the best of all, and so do Rosie and mamma ; but I will tell it you as well as I can. It is called ' Eric's Grave.'

" Once upon a time, a Russian lady with her three children were travelling over a wild, barren, desolate tract of country in Russia. She had one faithful old servant with her, and his name was Eric. It was in the depth of winter, and deep snow lay upon the ground ; and it was with great difficulty that the horses could drag the carriage through some parts of the road. But the real danger was from the troops of savage, horrid, hungry wolves which infested parts of the road. Now Eric was an old experienced traveller, and he knew that it would indeed be a terrible thing if they should meet a pack of these savage wolves. He kept on trying to make the postilions drive as fast as they possibly could ; and then he kept watching on this side, and watching on that, for he could not help feeling very uneasy indeed. The dark night was coming on, and they had still two whole miles to travel before they could reach the inn where they were to sleep. The road got more and more bad, and the horses could not go fast. And now it was that Eric's ear caught the sharp growl of the savage wolves. They were coming, and each moment he heard these growls nearer and nearer. By-and-by the carriage was surrounded by hundreds of these animals. The lady and the little children sat

in silent terror, fearing lest the wolves should do, as they knew they sometimes did, seize the horses. Then Eric said to them, as cheerfully as he could—

“‘Don’t be afraid ; but we must let them have one of the horses. We can do without it.’

“And then he managed to cut the reins which held one horse to the carriage, and set it free. Away and away galloped the frightened creature, and the wolves went after it. In a few minutes the poor horse was devoured, and the wolves were tearing after the carriage again. Eric said to his mistress—

“‘There is no help for it, another horse must be sacrificed.’

“And so it was ; but this second horse did not satisfy the horrid, hungry, voracious brutes, and they were after the carriage again as quick as lightning. The two horses which were left could not drag the heavy carriage through the bad roads as fast as the four had been able to drag it. They were still some distance from the inn, and another horse could not be spared. What, then, was to be done ? If the wolves could only be kept off from attacking the carriage for a few minutes more, then, Eric said within himself, his dear lady and the sweet children would be saved ; but not without. And there was but one way of doing this : the hungry and blood-thirsty animals must again have some food given to them—something to satisfy them—or they most certainly would spring upon the carriage, and devour first the horses, and

then the lady and the children. Eric heard them coming each moment nearer and nearer ; he heard their savage growls ; he saw their sharp eyes. He said to himself that no time must be lost. So he turned himself round, and he spoke quietly to his dear mistress, and he said—

“ ‘ When I am dead, be kind to my wife and little ones, dear lady ; and now I commit you and myself to the good God’s care.’ ”

“ He did not wait for an answer ; he did not hesitate a moment ; but he got down from off the front seat of the carriage, where he had been sitting—and we know no more of the faithful, noble Eric.

“ The wolves turned away from the carriage—turned away because they had got a fresh victim. The postilions urged the wearied, frightened, jaded horses on by whip and by voice, and before the horrible wolves were after them again, the carriage had been seen from the inn, and people came out with lighted torches to meet it, and to welcome the lady and her children. The danger was past, and they were saved. For the voices of the people, and the light of the torches, scared the wolves away, and the whole pack turned and fled.

“ The first thing that the lady did when she arrived at the inn was to send a large number of people to look for Eric, and to find out, if they could, what had been his fate, and what had become of him ; but they could not find anything of him. There was no trace

of him left. The wolves must have seized him the instant he got down from the carriage, and must have torn him to pieces, and devoured him altogether. The lady was indeed terribly distressed at the noble Eric's fate, for he had sacrificed his life to save hers and her children's; but she showed her gratitude as far as she could, in the care that she took of his wife and little ones."

And so ended Edith's story. The children did not speak for a minute or two; the sadness of the story had affected them greatly; little Rosie was in tears, and then at length Lucy broke the silence and said—

"I don't like such sad stories, Edith; why did you tell it us?"

"Because you asked me to tell it you," answered Edith.

"Yes," said Lucy, "we did ask you to tell it us, but we did not know what it was going to be. Oh, I am glad I don't live in Russia, and that there are no horrid wolves in England; ain't you, Katie?"

"Yes, Lucy, indeed I am," said Katie; "but if I did live in Russia I would shut myself in my house quite tight, and never go out for fear of the wolves, and I would have no doors to the house, and no windows, and then, you know, Lucy, they could not possibly get in to eat me up. Nor could they see that I was in."

"You foolish child," said Florence, "how could you get in or out of a house that had no doors and no windows, and how could you see to do anything? and

beside which, just as though wolves ever got in at doors and windows ! It is out of doors, and not indoors, that they always are."

"Not always," answered Katie, rather angrily, "for I have got a picture of little Red Riding Hood, and she is talking to her grandmother in bed, and it was not her grandmother at all, but a wolf."

"Of course, I know that," said Florence, "and that the wolf with his great eyes, and his great mouth, and his great head covered up with grandmother's nightcap, eat her up ; but, Katie, you must know that that is only a nonsense story, and not a true story, like the one Edith has been telling us is ; and I think you are a great goose to believe in such baby things."

Katie was mightily offended at this speech of Florence's, and she could not resist getting up and giving her a pinch, and saying, "You very unkind naughty girl, I don't like you at all when you speak to me in that way ; you know I am not a baby, Miss."

How all this would have ended, we can't say ; but happily Aunt Emma, hearing loud voices, and catching angry tones, came out and joined the party of young workers under the cedar-tree. She soon saw that something was wrong, and that both Kate and Florence looked flushed and angry ; but she took no notice of this, but said very quietly—

"May old Aunt Emma come and listen to what the young ones are telling each other, and hear them say all kinds of lovely and pleasant things ?"

These words of Aunt Emma's made the colour deepen in Katie's cheeks, and in Florence's also, and they two remained quite silent and did not attempt to tell how angry they had been a minute before with each other.

"What have you been doing, dears?" then asked the kind Aunt.

"Edith has been telling us such a very sad story, dear aunty," said Rosie; "shall I tell it you? it is all about wolves, and how—"

"No, Rosie, don't," cried out Lucy, "we have had quite enough about wolves, and I don't want to hear that over again."

"You shall tell it me another time, and when we are alone, dearest Rosie," then said Aunt Emma, "and I wonder very much if all you little maidens know the story of Beth Gelert."

"No, we don't! we don't!" came from one and all. "Will you tell it us, aunty? please do; we always like your stories much better than anyone else's."

"But," said aunty, "my story is about a wolf, and I thought you had heard enough about wolves, Lucy, for this day."

"No, not if you tell it us, only I did not want Rosie to begin and say all over again what we had just heard from Edith."

At this moment Elsie called out "Oh, look! look! pretty squirrel."

"Where, Elsie? where?" asked Katie.

"There, Miss Katie; in that great tree, jumping, jumping, jumping!"

As she said these words, Nero came bounding towards the place where the children had established themselves, bounding and barking with joy. He caught sight of the jumping squirrel, and made a dash at it; but he could not reach it, for the squirrel was far above his head; but he frightened the pretty little active nimble creature, and made it wish to get on to some tree farther off from that one under which shaggy big black Nero was barking; but it could not get away into a more safe place without jumping all across the gravel walk; and this jump was rather more than the little squirrel could manage. So what do you think it did? It took one great spring, and came down to Rosie's shoulder; there it halted for a moment, took breath and rested, and then sprang away into a large oak tree, where it could be hid, and quite safe from that terrible Nero. Rosie was so much pleased that the dear little squirrel had made her shoulder its resting-place; and each of the children said, "Oh, how I wish it had come on mine," and Katie asked—

"Were you frightened, Rosie?"

"No," said Rosie, "not a bit, it only felt very hot and trembling. I wish it would come again. Will it, Aunt Emma, do you think?"

"No, Rosie, I don't think it will; perhaps you might wait for years and years, and it would never do such a thing again."

"Oh then, I am more glad than ever that it did it then," answered Rosie ; "and now, please, dear aunty, will you go on with your story about the wolf?"

"My story," said Aunt Emma, "is this—that once a Welshman, by name Llewellyan, had a very favourite dog, called Gelert. This dog was as brave as a lion in the chase, and as gentle as a lamb in the house. One morning Llewellyan went forth to hunt, and as he went, he called Gelert, but no Gelert came ; he blew his bugle, but all in vain ; and he started away to the chase without his favourite hound. All day he missed him, and could not imagine what had become of him ; and when he returned home at nightfall, he was very glad to see Gelert bounding forth to meet him ; but what could have happened, and where could the dog have been, for Llewellyan saw that his lips and fangs were covered with blood ; still the dog crouched and licked his master's feet, and seemed so full of joy to see him again ; then when Llewellyan entered his castle, what did he see but blood-drops everywhere ? He hastened on, on into the room where he had left his sleeping beautiful boy in the morning. The little cot was now empty, and covered with blood. The agonized father called his child, but no voice replied ; there was blood, blood on every side, but there was no sign of the child. Frantic with grief and anger, Llewellyan plunged his spear into Gelert's side, calling him as he did so, the destroyer of his child. Poor Gelert gave one patient look of suffering at his

master's face, and one deep dying groan, and ceased to breathe. And at that very moment Llewellyan's ear caught a gentle cry, which came from beneath a heap of tangled cloths ; he turned and saw his child's rosy cherub face ; he lifted his boy all smiling and beaming in his arms, and then, for the first time, he saw a great, gaunt, savage wolf, tremendous even in death, lying torn and bleeding and dead beneath his boy's couch ; but not one scratch had the little one himself on all his fair white body. Then Llewellyan knew how rashly he had acted, and that he had in his anger killed the faithful, noble hound which had saved his child from the wolf. Oh, he was so grieved ; he said that as long as he lived he should ever rue the deed his hand had done, and he raised a costly sculptured tomb over his favourite Gelert's bones, and on that tomb was engraven Gelert's story."

"Thank you, Aunt Emma," said many voices.

"I said I should like your wolf story," exclaimed Lucy, "and so I do. But what a horrid shame it was of Llewellyan to kill his dog ; he might have known that it had not touched the child."

"So he might, Lucy, if he had not been so hasty and passionate ; but passion often makes people do things which they are sorry for all the rest of their lives, and yet they can't undo them. And now, Lucy," Aunt Emma went on, "we are waiting for your story."

"Oh, no !" said Lucy, "not for mine ; I can't tell

stories. It is Florence's turn ; she is older than I am, and she knows lots, and can make them too."

"Can you, Florence?" then asked Aunt Emma.

"No, not well at all. I can make stories to please my sister Rose and little girls like Kate, but not for bigger girls and grown-up people ; and I want to work now, and to finish this bead mat, and I can't ever think of anything to tell when I am working ; so somebody else must go on."

"Well," then said Aunt Emma, "as you are all so busy working, and I am the only idle one, suppose I were to go on, as you say, Florence, and read you a very pretty little anecdote of a Sardinian boy ; should you like to hear it, or are you tired?"

"No, we are not tired, and we should like to hear it," was the general answer.

"Very well, my loves ; then I will read it to you ; and by and by, either before tea, or after, as you all like best, I want you to take a basket and go into the wood, and gather some violets, primroses, wood anemones, and blue-bells, for me to take up to London to-morrow when I go, to a lady who dearly loves wild flowers, and can't get them, because she lives in London."

"Oh, yes!" said the children ; "we will go and gather her the most beautiful ones we can find."

"But let us go after tea," said Rosie, "because after tea in the wood the nightingale will be singing, and then we shall hear that as well as gather the flowers."

"Let it be so, then, my darling," answered aunty; "and now I will begin to read:—'Francesco was the only son of a carpenter in the island of Sardinia; he had two sisters younger than himself. When he was about ten years old a fire broke out in his father's house, which reduced it to ashes, and the unfortunate carpenter was burnt to death.'"

"Oh," said Lucy, "and my papa might have been burnt to death the other day when our house was turned into ashes."

"Indeed he might, dear Lucy, and your sisters also; but God took care of them, and saved you all when you were in great danger. Now I will go on:—'The fire ruined the family. It was in vain that Francesco tried to support his mother and sisters; he was too young to be able to do much. He got a good deal of money now and then by selling little birds, such as linnets, wrens, ringdoves, and pigeons, in the market town of Sussari. He had been used to catch birds for sale from the time that he was quite a little boy, and so he had become a very skilful capturer. He would climb from tree to tree, and seldom returned home without his cage being well stored with chaffinches, linnets, ringdoves, blackbirds, wrens, &c. Still all the assistance that both he and his sisters were able to procure for their mother was not nearly enough to supply her wants. In this difficulty Francesco hit upon quite a new and original device for gaining the money they so much wanted to get

them all food to eat and clothes to wear. It was this. He trained a young Angola cat to live harmlessly in the midst of his birds. He taught this cat, the natural enemy of all birds, to eat and to drink and to sleep in the midst of them, without attempting to hurt or to injure one of them. At length the cat, which he called Bianca, suffered these little birds to play all kinds of tricks with her, and she never even showed her claws, or attempted to catch one. Then he went still further than this ; for he instructed both the cat and the birds to play a kind of game, in which they both had to take their parts. Puss used to curl herself into a circle, with her head between her paws, and appear buried in sleep. The cage was then opened, and the tricky birds would rush out upon her, and try to awaken her by repeated strokes of their beaks. They then went on to pull her whiskers, and perch upon her head, and settle on her back, and there sing away as though they were fluttering about on the green branches of a tree. Puss took no notice of all this, but seemed to be asleep, or else purring away, and smoothing her long white coat, as though she were perfectly peaceful and content. The sight of this sleek and beautiful cat, seated calmly in the midst of a cage of birds, was then so new and unexpected a sight, that when Francesco exhibited it at the fair of Sussari, he was instantly surrounded by a host of admiring spectators. But this crowd of people was even still more

delighted when they heard Francesco call each little birdie by its name, and saw the tiny creature, when so called, fly quickly towards him, and perch on his hand. One by one they all thus came, until Francesco's head, and arms, and fingers, were covered over by them. The spectators were so pleased and enchanted with the boy's ingenuity, that they gave him a great deal of money. The next thing that Francesco did was to train a partridge, which he called Rosaletta; and this partridge became very much attached to him, and one day did him a great service; for a beautiful goldfinch had escaped from its cage, and was lost in a garden some little distance off. Francesco was in despair at this loss; for this goldfinch was one of his best performers; and, moreover, he had promised that very bird to the daughter of a lady from whom he had received great kindness. On the sixth morning after the loss of the goldfinch, Rosaletta, this tame and wise partridge, was seen chasing the truant birdie before her along the top of the linden trees towards home. Rosaletta led the way by little and little before the goldfinch, and at length, getting him home, seated him, as though in great disgrace, at the corner of the aviary, while she flew from side to side in triumph at her success. But Francesco most unwisely one day eat a great many mushrooms, and some that he eat were poisonous. This brought on an illness, of which he died. During the time that he was ill his birds flew incessantly round and round his

bed—some lying down sadly upon his pillow ; others flitting backwards and forwards above his head ; a few uttered short and mournful cries, and all took scarcely any meat or any drink. Each bird seemed to know, when Francesco died, that it had lost a kind friend. But poor Rosaletta perched herself on the coffin. When she was removed, she came back, and when they carried the coffin to the grave, she followed, and seating herself on a cypress tree close to the churchyard, she watched where he was put. When the crowd had departed, and the churchyard was left in its lonely silence, she flew to the grave, and never left it again, except to return to the cottage of Francesco's mother for her daily and accustomed food. She used to sleep upon the turret of the chapel which overlooked his grave ; and there she died about four months after the death of her beloved master.' And now, dears," said Aunt Emma, when she ceased to read, "what do you think of my story ; is it not wonderful and interesting too ?"

"Indeed it is," said Rosie. "I never knew that partridges could do such things as Rosaletta did, or care for anybody in that way ; I always thought they were only meant to be shot and eaten ; but now I should like to have one, and see if it would learn to love me as much as Rosaletta loved poor Francesco."

"I don't advise you to try, my Rosie, because you would have to give a great deal more time and trouble to the training of the partridge than you

could manage to give, if you are to succeed. Such things can only be done now and then, and want a great deal of perseverance and devotion to the one subject. But it is very wonderful that they can be done at all."

"Aunty," here said Katie, "is an Angola cat like our great white one? Edith says it is."

"Edith is quite right, Katie; yours is an Angola cat."

"Then, aunty, we can teach her not to eat our canaries and goldfinches; and we will try and teach them to sit on her back. You know, aunty, both of our canaries will sit on our hands; and the other day, just as I was doing a most difficult sum, and puzzling and puzzling to get it right, what should one of the canary birds do, but come and pop down on my hand, and try to put its beak up to my mouth. I knew very well what he wanted; it was some sugar; because we often do feed them with sugar out of our mouths."

"I think, dear Rosie," said Aunt Emma to all this, "that you must be content with the cat and the birds just as they are, and not try to do what I know you won't succeed in with either one or the other. Look, Nurse is coming to tell us that tea is ready; so our work, and our reading, and our talk, must now come to an end."

"If you please, young ladies," said Nurse, who came up at this moment, "tea is quite ready, and

there is a beautiful fresh foaming syllabub on the table, which is waiting to be eaten.

"A syllabub, a syllabub! oh, what a great treat, Nursie dear! How kind of you to get it for us," said Katie.

"Let us go at once," exclaimed Lucy; "I am so tired of this stupid work."

And in fact they were all rather tired, and glad to go; and so away they ran, leaving Nurse to put by their work; and then when they were settled round the tea-table, Aunt Emma and Mr. Howard came to join them; and Mr. Howard invited Edith and Florence Seckar for that day fortnight to have another good working afternoon for the bazaar. After tea all the young ones went into the wood to gather the sweet wild flowers which Aunt Emma wanted for the lady in London, and to hear the nightingale singing its song of joy. They returned to the house laden with treasures, and found that Mr. Seckar was waiting at the door in his basket-carriage for Edith and Florence.

"Come, my dear girls, come," he said; "you must not keep me waiting any longer—mamma will wonder what has become of us."

So into the carriage they popped; and with a great deal of love for Rose, and a most sweet bouquet of flowers for her too, they started home; and our Rose and Kate went to have a little quiet read with Aunt Emma before going to bed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next fortnight went by very quietly, and with no interruptions. The lessons were done regularly, and out of lesson-hours the work for the bazaar got on nicely. Saturday morning came—the Saturday morning of the day when Edith and Florence Seckar were again to come and spend a working afternoon—lessons were over, and the children had had a good hour's work in their garden, weeding and tying up the pinks, and watering the freshly turned out geraniums. They had been very busy; and as they found they had still a quarter of an hour before dinner, after the arrival of their friends, they all went into the school-room to get the materials for the afternoon's work ready. One of the shelves in the school-room cupboard was quite full of things for the bazaar—pin-cushions, pen-wipers, bead-mats, scent-bags, markers, &c., lay there tidily wrapped up in silver paper—all made by Aunt Emma, Nurse, Mrs. Long, Lucy, Rose, and Kate; and, in addition to these, there was a purple velvet case, tied with gold thread, which had in it half-a-dozen fine cambric bands—a present from Lady Hurst—and a large bundle of beautifully-made poor

children's clothes, done by the little girls in the industrial school—a present from Mrs. Neville, the clergyman's wife, who had not much time to work herself, because she had so many children and the parish to attend to.

"Why Mrs. Long," said Rose, when she saw how full the shelf was of these articles for the bazaar, "we shall indeed have to clear another shelf, because you know we shall finish a great many things this afternoon, and we cannot put any more on this one shelf without crushing all our pretty things."

"Well, dear, you may clear another, if you want it," was Mrs. Long's answer, "and we must find some other place for the books and slates which you will have to remove till the bazaar is over; but don't begin to do it now, because the dinner bell will ring in a minute. Hark! there it is."

So down into the dining-room they all went for dinner; and just as they were planning to have their chairs, and table, and work under the cedar tree, as they had had it before, patter, patter, patter went the rain upon the windows.

"Oh, dear me!" said Lucy; "I do believe it is raining. How very tiresome! And we shan't be able to go out."

"Perhaps, Lucy, it is only a shower, and will be over soon, and then we can go."

"But Edith, I am afraid it is more than a shower," said Aunt Emma to this remark of Edith's; "it is

raining more heavily now than it did a few minutes ago, and looks to me very like a wet afternoon."

At this moment Mr. Howard came in, and when he had shaken hands with Edith and Florence Seckar, and asked after Rose, he said, "It is going to be a thoroughly wet afternoon, I fear; "and so all this troop of young ladies must content themselves with the in-doors' drawing-room, instead of the green out-of-doors' one under the cedar tree."

"We are so sorry, papa dear," said Rosie; "we did so want to be out of doors."

"I am very sorry, too," answered Mr. Howard; "but, my child, 'What can't be cured must be endured,' as some wise person or other once said; and so you little maidens will all be obliged to endure the house for this afternoon, and I shall be obliged to endure the rain; for I must be out the rest of the day on some business, and indeed I have to be off this very minute; and so good bye to you all, and good success to the work."

When Mr. Howard was gone, Aunt Emma told the young ladies that she fully intended to devote herself to them for the afternoon; and then she added, "I shan't ask you into my room, because you are so large a party, and the drawing-room will be cooler and more convenient; but I will come to you there as soon as you are all seated; and I dare say Mrs. Long will be glad of the afternoon to herself." Mrs. Long said that she should, because she had letters to write

for the Indian Mail—letters which must necessarily take her some time—and when she had written them, then she would come and help to get on with the work.

About half-an-hour after dinner Aunt Emma went into the drawing-room, and found Rosie curled up on the sofa, with her great white cat lying asleep in her lap, and she herself very busy with a marker which she had determined to finish that day. Kate and Lucy were seated on two low stools beside the window, threading beads, and Edith and Florence were cutting out letters for a text, which Mrs. Neville had promised to buy if they would make.

"How busy you all are," said Aunt Emma. "I have brought my work to do too. It is the banner-screen, which papa says he shall buy."

"Have you got anything to tell us, aunty?" asked Rosie, "or any game that we can play at whilst we are working?"

"Do you think, dear," said Aunt Emma, in reply, "that you could do this?—Could you all find me some celebrated person whose name begins with the letter E?"

"Let us try, please," answered Edith Seckar. "We have played at this at home sometimes, and we generally can find some names for every letter."

"Then we will begin," said Aunt Emma; "and you shall say the first one, Edith."

"I shall say Queen Elizabeth," then replied Edith,

"because she was a very brave queen; though I do hate her for putting Mary Queen of Scots to death."

"So do I," answered Aunt Emma; "and I will have Edward the Black Prince; that noble young Englishman."

"And I," exclaimed Lucy, "Edward VI., because he was so wise and old, though he was quite young when he died."

"Now, Rosie dear; it is your turn."

"I mean to have Queen Eleanor," answered Rosie; "that queen, I mean, who sucked the poison out of her husband's, the king's arm."

"Very well, dear. Now, Katie, who have you got?"

"Nobody, Aunt Emma," answered Katie, "but you, because your name begins with E."

This choice of Katie's was received with a shout from all the children.

"Only fancy, Aunt Emma a celebrated person like kings and queens are!" said Lucy. "Why, Katie, how could you be so foolish as to say Aunt Emma? You know she is not celebrated, and not at all the kind of person that we ought to name when we play at these games."

"I don't know any celebrated people at all, and, therefore, I can't know what letter their names begin with; but I do know Aunt Emma, and that her name begins with E, and she is celebrated to me."

"Very well, my dear Katie," answered Aunt

Emma ; "you shall choose me, if you like, and I will gladly be your celebrated person ; and I shan't call you foolish, as Lucy does, for having chosen me."

"Lucy is always calling me foolish," replied Katie, "and I am not a bit more foolish than she is."

"What do you mean, Miss, by speaking so?" said Lucy, looking very angry.

"Hush, children, hush!" here said Aunt Emma ; "I won't have you speak in this way to each other. If we go on with this game, will you promise me not to be so hasty and irritable? Lucy, will you try?"

"Yes," said Lucy, "I will. And, Katie dear, I do love you, though I call you foolish sometimes; it is my way, you know, and it does not matter."

So peace was made between the two little combatants, and the game went on.

"Let us have the letter C, please aunty, now," asked Rose, "because I have got such a good one in C ; and that is Charles I., my hero."

"Oh, Rosie," said Lucy ; "he is the very one I had meant to have. Why did you choose him? How unkind!"

"But, Lucy," said Rose, "I did not know you meant to have him ; can't you find somebody else?"

"No one I want to have half so much," was Lucy's reply. "Go on, please Edith, while I think."

And Edith chose Charles XII. ; for she had just been reading about him in her history-book. And

Florence chose Cæsar Augustus. Then came Aunt Emma; and who should she choose but Casabianca.

"And who is he?" asked several voices at once.

"I never heard a word about him," said Lucy.

"Who can he be?" asked Edith.

"Well," said Aunt Emma, to all these inquiries, "if the truth must be told, I know very little about him myself; but I mentioned his name on purpose that I might read you such a pretty poem which was written about him, and which I am sure you will like. Now listen.

The boy stood on the burning deck
Whence all but him had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck,
Shone round him o'er the dead.
Yet beautiful and bright he stood
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud though child-like form.
The flames rolled on,—he would not go
Without his father's word;
That father faint in death below;
His voice no longer heard.
He called aloud, "Say, father! say
If yet my task is done!"
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.
"Speak, father!" once again he cried,
"If I may yet be gone!"
And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames roll'd on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair;
And look'd from that lone post of death,
In still but brave despair.

And shouted but once more aloud,
"My father, must I stay?"
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And stream'd above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound,
The boy—oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds, that far around
With fragments strew'd the sea,—

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part;
But the noblest thing which perish'd there
Was that young faithful heart.

"Did he die, aunty dear?" asked Rosie, when aunty finished; "did he die? and why didn't his father tell him he might go?"

"Because, Rosie, his father was dead himself, and did not hear him ask, and so he stayed on the ship till it blew up."

"Oh, aunty, what a pity; how sad! I am glad you chose him; but is it true?"

"That, dear, I don't know; but this I do know, that great deeds have been done many a time by

obedient, faithful, loving, good boys, and such was Casabianca ; and now have we finished our C's ? ”

“ No, not yet,” said Katie, “ I have not had mine, nor Lucy hers. Whom shall I have, aunty ? Do tell me, and then they won't laugh at me.”

So aunty told her to have King Canute, the king who made his flattering courtiers place a seat for him in front of the great waves of the mighty sea, and as these waves came nearer and nearer to him, he rebuked them, and told them to retire back and not to dare to come near him, the king of England ; and the waves did not hear his words, they didn't mind what he said, but came on, and on, and on, and would have washed him away if his courtiers had not entreated him to rise, and to flee before them. Then said the king, “ You see I am not so great a man as you are always telling me that I am, for the waves did not obey my word, but came rolling on in spite of my commands, and would have washed me away even as though I had been a beggar, or a worm.”

This story, too, pleased the children ; and now all had said their C's but Lucy, and the laugh was against her this time, as it had been against Katie the time before, for whom should she say but Cinderella.

“ Cinderella ! ” the children, one and all, shouted out ; “ she famous ! a girl in a fairy book ! a girl who never lived, and had fairy godmothers ! What a ridiculous child you are, Lucy, to say Cinderella, and to put her with famous kings and queens, and great people.”

"I don't think I am so very ridiculous, then, Miss Florence," answered Lucy, mightily offended. "Cinderella was famous, for every girl and every boy in England, and Ireland, and Scotland, and all over the world, knows about Cinderella, and that she had fairy godmothers, and does live in a fairy story book, and I will have her for my celebrated C, and I like her better than anybody else that has been said."

"Aunt Emma, may she have her?" asked Rosie.

"Yes, Rosie dear, she may; it is a very odd choice, but still you know little girls do choose to do, and to say odd things sometimes; but I think as I allowed Katie to have Aunt Emma for her E, I must let Lucy have Cinderella for her C."

When E and C had been done, they tried L and S, and then they grew tired of this game, and wished to do something else; and Edith said, "Aunt Emma" (for all the children who came to the Hall called Miss Howard Aunt Emma), "what do you think our Nurse Mary's youngest sister did the other day?"

"What did she do, dear Edith? I should like to hear."

"Oh, she did this: Do you know that she is living as cook with an old lady, and there is one other servant in the house. This other servant was not well, and had gone to bed early, and the old lady was gone to bed too, and Charlotte, that is Mary's sister, was sitting up late to finish her ironing, when she heard a noise like the tramping of feet outside the house

Nurse says the house is in a very lonely place, with no cottages near, and she never could think how her sister Charlotte could bear to live in it ; but Charlotte is very brave, much more brave than Nurse is. So that night she listened, and listened, and she heard quite plainly some people walking round and round the house. At last they stopped, and she heard them shake the scullery window. Oh, she was so frightened, she could not think what to do ; but except she did something she felt quite sure that she should be murdered. So she stole out of the kitchen very quietly. She went to the scullery door, and she locked it as tight as she could lock it ; then she went upstairs, and she got a large heavy basket of coals, and she began with all her force to dash and to roll the great pieces of coal down the stairs. Crash, crash, crash, they went one after another ; and do you know the noise frightened the robbers so much that they ran away just as they were getting into the house, for they had got the scullery window wide open. She and the other maid, who had got up when she heard this dreadful noise, sat up all night. They dared not go to bed, and they put the pokers into the kitchen fire to have them red hot in case the robbers should come back again ; and Nurse says that if the robbers had come back, which they didn't, Charlotte would have burnt them dreadfully with the red-hot pokers. Wasn't she brave, Aunt Emma ?”

“Indeed, Edith, she was ; and she showed wonder-

ful courage and presence of mind. It is a very rare thing to hear of a girl who could act so bravely under such circumstances."

"Yes, Aunt Emma, and Nurse told me everybody says so, and she has had a great number of presents from people who have heard of what she did, and offers of such good places; but the old lady, her mistress, has entreated her not to leave her, and so she says she won't."

"I think, Edith, from all you say, Charlotte must be a good girl as well as a brave one, and some day or other she will do better for herself, I have no doubt."

"I am very glad I wasn't Charlotte," said Lucy, "I should have screamed, or fainted, or something like that."

"Most probably you would, Lucy," answered Aunt Emma; "but then you are very young at present, and have not cut your wisdom teeth yet."

"But, aunty dear," asked Rosie, "will Lucy get much wiser when she cuts her wisdom teeth? and shall I? and will Katie?"

"I hope so, Rosie; because don't you think you all three want a great deal more wisdom than you have got?"

"Then, I suppose," here exclaimed Lucy, "that all people who have cut their wisdom teeth, are very wise indeed, and can do business, and preach sermons, and write books, and all that?"

"Well, Lucy," said Aunt Emma, "I don't feel

quite sure that all who have cut their wisdom teeth can do all these things; but I think that probably they have a better chance of doing them after than before. Now listen to me, and I will tell you what a friend of mine once did when she had a fright about robbers. She was living in a house in the neighbourhood of a large town. It was not a good neighbourhood; but her brother, in whose house she lived, was a clergyman, and so he was obliged to live in this bad situation. It was not a lonely house, but it was a single house, and had no communication with any other. Well, one Sunday evening, everybody in the house but herself was gone to church. She had said she should not object to be left alone in the house, and so she was left. It was a dark, dull, November evening, and the gas burned very dim through the foggy air. My friend was in the dining-room, seated by the fire, and reading, when she heard some footsteps on the narrow gravel walk which led to the front door. She listened, and then she traced distinctly footsteps from one window to another, and then on to another, and then round to the back door. She got frightened, and did not like this at all. She knew that except she could attract somebody's attention, the house might be broken into, and she herself perhaps killed; so she went upstairs to the top of the house, she opened a window, and she flung down on the pavement below, with as much force as she could, first the tongs, then after them the shovel, and then the poker upon the top

of the others. Cling and clash, and cling and clash, they went as they came down on the stone pavement, and upon each other. And this cling and clash attracted the attention of a policeman as he was going his rounds. He came to see if anything was amiss ; and on hearing the policeman, the men made off with themselves ; and so the house was saved from being broken into."

"What a capital thought that was of the lady's," said Lucy. "But wasn't it enough to frighten her to hear these steps all round the house, and she quite alone?"

"Indeed it was," answered Katie. "I hope I shall never be in a house alone. I don't like even being in a room alone, especially when it is dark—do you, Edith?"

"I don't mind it nearly as much as I did when I was a little girl," said Edith ; "and now I have a room to myself ; sometimes at night I am a little frightened, but not much, because my sisters sleep in another room close to mine ; and then I always look under the bed."

"Did you ever see anybody under your bed?" asked Rosie.

"No, Rosie, I never did ; and I really can't think what I should do if I did. But papa told me the other day what an old gentleman once said when he did find a robber under his bed. He looked, and there lay a man curled up ; and instead of being frightened and running away, he said, 'Ho ! my friend,

I have been looking for you these forty years, and here you are at last.'"

At these words the children gave such a shout of laughter; they did so amuse them. They wanted very much to know what became of the robber, and what the old gentleman did with him when he had found him at last; but Edith could not tell them anything more, because her father had not told her.

Then said Florence, "I should like to have a great deal of presence of mind, because people can do such great things that have got it. Papa took us to hear a lecture about presence of mind a little while ago, and the lecturer told us such wonderful stories about people who had got it."

"It is a great gift, Florence," said Aunt Emma. "Some children have it, and some grown-up people never have it. I read the other day about a lady who had it in a great degree. This lady was on a lawn outside her house, with all her children round her, when she was startled by hearing hooting, and a hubbub of voices, and a great cry of 'Mad dog! mad dog!' She looked up, and there straight before her, and not more than a hundred yards off, she saw a dog running at full speed, foaming at the mouth, and with its tongue out, evidently mad. She had no time to escape, or to place her children in safety. She stood where she was in front of her children; and in a moment she gathered up her thick woollen dress, and held it tight in her hands. On came the dog, on

straight at her, and she received its head in the folds of her dress ; and there she managed to keep it so tight and so firm, and to hold it with that grasp of unnatural strength which sometimes is given to people in moments of great danger, till some one came to her help, and the dog was either secured or killed—I don't know which—and so she and her children were saved."

"Ah! that was what I call presence of mind," said Florence. "I should like to do something grand like that."

"Well, dear Florence, if ever you are called to act in great danger, or in a great emergency, I hope the strength and the courage will be given you to know what to do, and to do it ; but I don't think you ought to wish for moments of great danger, or that in such moments you could do something great, if they come. The more humble and the more faithful you are, so much the more sure may you be of help from God, who is always near you, and always has help to give to any one in trouble or danger. You remember that verse—'God is a very present help in time of trouble ;' and it will be much better for you always to trust in His strength, instead of your own presence of mind. And now, dear, after these few words of advice, tell me, cannot you remember any of the anecdotes that you heard at that lecture."

"No, Aunt Emma, I don't think I can ; at least, not well enough to tell ; only this funny one ; and it

is about a poor idiot. Not quite an idiot he wasn't ; but not sensible as most people are. One day this idiot heard some gentlemen talking about where, if they had a third eye, they would put it. Some said in the back of their head, and some said at the top. One of these gentleman was a doctor. So this poor idiot turned round to him, and said, ' And if I were a doctor like you, I would put it on the tip of my finger, and then I could see down people's throats, and find out what was the matter.' "

" That was a very sharp remark for a man only half-witted," said Aunt Emma ; " but it is not an unusual thing for half-witted folk to say very quaint and acute things sometimes."

This kind of chat went on for a little while longer, and then the young ones were summoned to tea. But the afternoon, in spite of the rain, had been a pleasant one, and a good deal had been finished off. After tea, the rain being over, Mrs. Long said that she, and Rose, and Kate would walk part of the way home with Edith and Florence Seckar. And so they started, and a very pleasant refreshing walk they had. The soft evening air blew upon them, and the nightingales sang to them, and the lilacs, and the hawthorns, and the golden laburnums, made the air so sweet for them, and the shrubberies so lovely, that they were very, very sorry when the walk was over, and Mrs. Long told her little pupils that they must go in. She let them stay out till it was time for them to go to bed ;

so that they only just ran into the dining-room to get some dessert, and some kisses from papa and Aunt Emma, and then up to Nurse, who was waiting impatiently for them, and did not seem quite to approve of their being out so late.

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT three weeks after the last Saturday working party, Mr. Howard came up into the school-room whilst the little girls were at their morning lessons. He said, "And now, my darlings, I can tell you exactly when this long-expected bazaar may take place."

"When, papa, when? Do tell us!" exclaimed both Rose and Kate.

"In a few days, dears."

"A few days! Why, we shall never be ready."

"You must try and be ready then," said Mr. Howard, "because Walter tells me in a letter which came this morning, that the only leave he can get before his holidays, which do not begin till August, is from next Monday evening till Wednesday evening, or possibly Thursday morning, if he can manage to be in school at ten. So you see, loves, it must either be next week, or not before the winter, because I intend to take you all to Scotland the very day after Walter's real holidays begin. So can you be ready?"

"Oh, yes! oh, yes! we will be ready. We can stay for two or three nights, if we are not, on such a



very important occasion as this. I am sure Nurse would let us," said Rosie.

"But, dear Rosie, even if Nurse would let you, I am afraid papa would not," then said Mr. Howard, very much amused at his little daughter's unnecessary eagerness. "No, no, we won't have any sitting up after bed-time; the days are quite long enough for such young creatures as you three are. But, Mrs. Long, what do you say to next week? Do you think it will be possible to get ready?"

"Yes, Mr. Howard, I do. I have no doubt we can finish up everything we have in hand by Monday night, and we won't begin anything fresh."

"But, Mrs. Long," said Lucy, "there are so many other things we wanted to do."

"Lucy," answered Mr. Howard, "the other things must be deferred to some future day, and we will be content with what we have got. And now, dear, you may write to your papa, and ask him if he will come to the bazaar, and bring Edith with him; and I shall write also. And, Rosie, you may write to Susan, and ask her to come on Monday, and bring her friend Grace Richmond with her. Then on Tuesday everything shall be made ready, and on Wednesday we will have the bazaar; that is to say, to-morrow week. I shall write to Walter and tell him what we have arranged; and Aunt Emma will write some notes of invitation to our friends. And, dears, you must get all your lessons nicely done this morning, and then after dinner I

will send you in the pony carriage, first to the Seckars to tell them, and then on to several other places—the Seymours and the Nevilles included; and I want you to say that all the things for the bazaar that any kind lady or gentleman wishes to send ought to be here on Monday next, at the very latest. Aunt Emma also has got some commissions for you to do, so you won't be back, I am sure, in time for any more lessons to-day. Mrs. Long, you can drive the pony, I think—can't you?"

"Yes; I have driven it often," was Mrs. Long's reply.

"Then if you will drive this afternoon, I will send the groom on horseback with you to open the gates and ring the bells, and hold the pony."

At dinner-time the children could talk of nothing else but the bazaar. They were very anxious to know where it was to be held, and whether all the tables in the house would hold half the beautiful things that they felt quite positive would be sent.

Aunt Emma told them that she and papa had not quite decided yet where the bazaar would be; but she thought most likely it would be in the hall, and that the sofas and chairs, and ottomans, would be placed in the garden, and under the verandah, and the luncheon in the dining-room; but if it should happen to be a wet day, they must make some different arrangements.

"Oh, I hope it won't rain; I hope the rain will all

go to Spain," was Katie's fervent desire, a desire re-echoed by the other two little girls.

It was a very busy week both for Rose, and Kate, and Lucy ; also for Aunt Emma, who had many preparations to arrange, and many matters to think of ; and for Nurse, for she was determined that her two pets should be very prettily dressed, and so she must needs get their papa to allow them to have pink silk skirts, and white muslin jackets, and white hats and feathers ; and then Mr. Howard said Lucy was to have the same, which Nurse, in her heart did not quite like ; but as master was determined, she dared not disobey ; and very pretty the dresses were. Mrs. Long, too, had a great deal to do ; for there were so many things to be finished up, and odds and ends to do in which the children could not help her. By Saturday night the greater part of what they had to do was done, and everybody was very tired. Such packages as came in on Saturday and Monday ! The hall looked something like a warehouse, much to the children's amusement. They thought it a very hard case that neither papa nor Aunt Emma would allow any of these packages to be opened till Tuesday morning. They said they could not really wait ; they wanted so dreadfully to see what was in them ; and papa said that they really must wait, and that this dreadful want must go unsatisfied till Tuesday. On Monday afternoon every article of furniture in the hall, except the great organ, was cleared out ; tables were

arranged down the sides and across the top, and these tables were covered with snowy white damask cloths. The children's stall was at the head of the table, and over it waved a white and gold embroidered banner with these words worked in blue silk : " For the children's ward of the hospital."

By six o'clock on Monday all these preparations were completed ; and when Susan and Grace Richmond arrived, about half-past six, they were very much astonished at the wonderful change in the hall, and declared that they should hardly know it to be the same room. It seemed to them so much larger, and so altered altogether : they both had the same longing that the younger ones had had, to be allowed to open the packages and see what they contained ; but Aunt Emma entreated them not to do so till the morning. She said, " It is not such a very long time, dears, now to wait, and I am sure it will be better on all accounts not to begin and pull things about this evening. Whilst we are at dinner, Nurse and my maid are to take every parcel that we have as yet received down into the housekeeper's room, and there all the litter and mess from unpacking shall take place."

" Very well, aunty," said Susan, " let it be so, we will be content ; but I must tell Nurse that one of our boxes is crammed full of things for the bazaar, and such beautiful things too."

" Let me run and tell her now this very minute," exclaimed Rosie. " Which box is it, Susan ?"

"I will give it to Nurse myself," said Susan, "because we must go upstairs and dress for dinner, or we shall be late."

"Oh, Susan, love," said Aunt Emma, "I forgot to tell you that we are not going to have a regular dinner to-day, but a tea-supper at eight. Your father is gone in the omnibus to the Stair station, which is some four miles off, to meet the Dean and Edith, and on his way home he will call at our usual station to pick up Walter and Reginald, and Aunt Clare, with Sissy and Lizzy. Aunt Clare, when she heard of the bazaar, said she must come and bring your cousins, and so they will all be here by-and-by; and we shall have quite a large gathering for supper, for these troublesome little pussies are invited to be of the party."

"Aunty, you don't think us troublesome little pussies, I am sure," said Rosie, running up to aunty and kissing her, "for you know how busy we have been all day; and you said this afternoon that we really had been of a great deal of use—didn't you, aunty darling?"

"Yes, I did, my pet; and you were of a great deal of use, because you were all three so willing to do what you were bid, and so good about not opening any parcel, or bringing your own work out of the cupboard when you were told not; and I am always so pleased when you are gentle and obedient. Now don't you think that Grace Richmond and sister

Sue would like to have a run round the garden before they go to get ready for tea this delicious evening? Just look at that glorious moon, shining through those masses of silvery white clouds. It is so lovely, we must all go out, and refresh ourselves after the journey and toil of the day."

They stayed out till the church bells chimed the quarter to eight; then Aunt Emma said, "Now, indeed, we must go in; and look! there comes the carriage with all our expected friends."

At this sight the little ones scampered away, and the others followed more quietly. Such a greeting as took place at the hall door. Lucy was in tears of joy to see her own papa, and darling, darling Edith again; and then Walter had to receive his usual quantity of kisses; and then Aunt Clare, and Lizzy and Sissy. And when this was over, each and all had to be shown the changed hall, and to be asked, "If it did not look strange?" In short, there was so much to be talked about, and so many questions to be asked and answered, that Mr. Howard had to threaten the young ones with a birch rod to whip them all upstairs to get ready for supper, if they would not go without.

"Papa is only in fun," said Katie to Edith, round whose neck was her arm; "but we will go, for I am terribly hungry—an't you, Edith?"

Well, so they went, and were nearly ready when the gong sounded; and a very merry supper they

had ; such laughing and talking, and arranging how matters were to be on the next day, and the day after—the bazaar day ; and at last Nurse came and entreated that her young ladies might be allowed to go to bed ; for she said, “ They will be so tired and cross in the morning, I shall be able to do nothing with them, if they are kept up much longer ; and two such moithering days coming.”

So Nurse was allowed to carry them off, and get them into bed without any dawdling or delay. They were all in good time the next morning ; and the younger ones had a famous game of croquet whilst the elders were at breakfast in the dining-room. Walter and Susan had promised to call them as soon as they were ready to begin and open the packages, and so they stayed out till this summons came. They were very eager for it to come, and so rejoiced when they saw Grace Richmond coming to them, and saying, “ Now, dears, is your game finished ? Because if it is, we can find work for you all.”

“ It is not finished,” said Lucy ; “ and it will take us an hour to finish, because Sissy and Lizzy croquet us such great distances off, that we never can get back ; so we don’t care to go on—do we, Rosie ? ”

“ No,” said Rosie, “ I don’t want to finish this game ; but I want very much indeed to go and see all the lovely things unpacked.”

So with common consent the game was abandoned, and the children went into the house, and were very

soon as busy as bees, carrying one thing after another up from the housekeeper's room into the hall, and so full of rapture, admiration, and delight with the treasures which the packages contained, that they scarcely knew how to contain themselves. It took the whole of the day to make the necessary preparations for the bazaar ; but by evening-tide everything was done, except the flower-decorations, and these were put off till the morning. But the gardener promised that by eight o'clock the bouquets should all be made, and the pots of flowers brought in, and the vases beautifully dressed, and he kept his promise. Immediately the children had finished breakfast they scampered down stairs and into the hall to see how everything looked in the morning, and there they found papa, and Susan, and Grace, and Walter, and Reginald, all so busy arranging the flowers, and giving the last finishing-up touches to everything ; and pretty and bright as the tables had looked the evening before, they looked much brighter and prettier now, with the sweet-scented, bright-hued lovely flowers scattered everywhere and blending with everything.

"Oh, exquisite ! exquisite ! papa," exclaimed Rosie. "I don't think there was ever so beautiful a bazaar as ours will be. Shall we get a thousand pounds ?"

"A thousand, Rosie !" said Katie, before papa could answer. "Of course we shall, and ten thousand too—shan't we, Grace ?"

"I don't think we shall, dear Katie," answered Grace.

"And I am sure we shan't, dear Katie," said her papa; "but certainly the room does look very pretty, and we ought to be very much obliged to all our kind friends for the help they have been so willing to give us. Now we must go and get our breakfast, as the servants want the dining-room as soon as we can let them have it to prepare the luncheon."

The guests were invited for one o'clock; and as the children were not wanted in the house, but rather wanted out of it, the servants being one and all as busy as busy could be, immediately Grace had finished her breakfast, she went by Aunt Emma's request, and gathered all the young ones under the large fresh cool cedar-tree, and read to them some charming stories, thereby keeping them quiet, and preventing them from running about and tiring themselves before the day's business, or as Rosie called it, "the pleasure-business," began. Very soon after the clock struck twelve, Nurse came and said she wanted her two young ladies, and Miss Lucy, and Miss Edith, to dress them, as it would take some time to get them all four ready; and they went at once, as Katie announced that it would not do for them on any account to be late. When they reached the nursery, they found that good thoughtful old Nursie had provided some luncheon for them, though their real luncheon was to be had down in the dining-room with all the company, at a table got ready expressly for the children.

By-and-by, as Mr. Howard, Aunt Emma, Dean Campbell, and Aunt Clair were all waiting for the arrival of their guests and chatting in the verandah, they were joined by such a troop of little girls, some in pink silk, some in white muslins, and all looking so gay, and glad, and bright, that it was quite pleasant to see them. And now the carriages began to arrive—first one, and then another, and then four or five close together; and soon the children and the young ladies were so busy selling, and the ladies and the gentlemen were so busy buying, that if Aunt Emma and papa had not come and carried off Rose, and Kate, and Lucy, and Edith, they would have forgotten that they had not had any dinner.

After dinner they set to work again in real good earnest, and by five o'clock there was scarcely a single pretty thing left on the children's stall; they had all been bought; and such a heap of money lay there—shillings, half-crowns, golden sovereigns, silver bits of all sorts. Katie ran up to Susan's stall to peep and see if she and Grace had got half as much money as they had, and she returned with the news, that she was quite sure that they had not got nearly as much. But, in truth, all the sellers had done well and been very successful. Walter had managed capitally; he had had a stall filled with pictures, and illuminations, and various articles which were not what he called "girls' things," because he

decidedly objected to selling them. And when at length the selling was over, and the ladies and gentlemen began to leave the hall, and go out into the cool fresh lovely garden, where the air was perfumed by the roses in their full grand bloom, and by the creeping white starred jessamine, and by the fragrant green mignonette, then it was found that a great deal of money had been collected. Mr. Howard took it all into his own keeping, and locked it up safely. Katie ran up to him, and asked, "Is it a thousand pounds, papa, or is it much more?"

"It is much, much less, my little Katie," answered papa; "but how much I can't tell you, because I have not had time to count it yet. I shall do so by-and-by, when all our guests are gone."

But when Mr. Howard joined his guests at the tea-table, which had been placed under the great cedar-tree, he found them all so eager to know what amount had been collected, that he went and brought out the bag which contained the money, and it was counted over, and in it was no less than two hundred and two pounds, fourteen shillings, and three pence—a very small sum indeed in the children's eyes, but a very and a most unexpectedly large one in every one else's. But there had been several very rich people at the bazaar, who had been extremely generous. One gentleman, who took a great interest in the hospital for which the bazaar was held, and knew that it greatly needed all the help it could get, had

put thirty pounds on the children's plate, wrapped up in white paper, on which was written, "For the poor suffering little ones."

"But, papa," said Katie, "I felt quite sure it would be a thousand pounds, and Grace says it is not even a quarter of it; and yet you say we have got a very large sum."

"And so we have, my dear child," was papa's answer; "a much larger sum than I had expected. Our friends have been most kind and generous; and I am so glad, because the hospital is greatly in need of money."

And indeed the day had been a very successful one, and a very tiring one too; the children were downright weary when they went to bed about eight o'clock.

"Oh, Nursie, I hope we shall never have another bazaar; I am so tired, I don't know what to do; and my legs ache so, that I think they will fall off."

This was poor worn-out little Rosie's speech when Nurse was undressing her. And every one in the house hoped, in their heart, if the truth must be told, that they never might have to arrange and carry out another bazaar; for it really was a great deal of trouble, and a most tiring affair.

The next morning, long before Rosie or Kate had opened their eyes, or thought of awaking, Walter and Reginald were off back to school; and later in the day Susan and Grace went away also; and then the day after Lucy and Edith Campbell departed with

their dear papa, and our little friends Rosie and Kate were left alone with Mr. Howard, Aunt Emma, and Mrs. Long.

Mr. Howard told them that they must go back to their usual routine of lessons, and work away very diligently for six more weeks, and then early in August he meant to take them with him, and Aunt Emma, and Nurse, and Walter, and Susan, to Scotland; and there they were to do no lessons, but run about all day, and be like little wild goats, bounding up and down the mountains. This thought of Scotland pleased the children exceedingly; and more so, when they heard that probably the Dean, and Mrs. Campbell, and Lucy, and Edith, and little Agnes, and the younger ones still, and the boys from school, would come to the same place where they were going, if they could get a house large enough to hold them.

"Will Mrs. Long come with us?" asked Katie.

"No, love," answered Aunt Emma. "Mrs. Long will go to her sister's house, and spend her holidays with her own friends, and with her own little Alice."

"Oh, then I know she will be quite happy," said Rose; "much happier than if she was with us, and teaching us lessons; because, you know, dear aunty, if she was with us, we should be obliged to do our lessons."

And so now we will bid good bye to our friends

young and old, little and big, hoping that they will all enjoy their Scotch tour very much, and return home much the better for the delicious fresh mountain air in September.

THE END.

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